

"double-dealing entry into the party", of course, Alexander Ilyich joined the Bolsheviks not for ideological, but for career reasons. But weren't the vast majority of Communist Party members driven by the same career motives? Even Lenin and Stalin, in fact, considered the party as a means of seizing power, hoping to take the main role in the new state.

Yegorov was shot on February 23, 1939, on the 21st anniversary of the creation of the Red Army, in whose ranks the marshal was from the first day. He was rehabilitated on March 14, 1956 by the same Military Collegium of the Supreme Court of the USSR, which now overturned the death sentence "due to newly discovered circumstances" and dismissed the case "due to the lack of corpus delicti."

According to the exact definition of V.N. Rapoport and Yu.A. Geller, Marshal Yegorov is "a man in whose nature there was more of an official than of a commander." We can say that, unlike Tukhachevsky, Yegorov's death was an accident. If Alexander Ilyich had kept his mouth shut, had not complained in the company of not very reliable friends about the incorrect coverage of the role of Stalin and his own, it is unlikely that denunciations against him would have been given a go. I doubt that Alexander Ilyich would have been at his best during the Great Patriotic War. He could expect an honorable resignation with an appointment to a minor position. But fate did not let Yegorova leave such a happy ending.

SERGEY KHUDYAKOV WINGED MARSHAL, NOT FLYING INTO THE SKY

Sergei Alexandrovich Khudyakov is the most unknown of the exterminated marshals. So far, no book has been written about him. Meanwhile, the life of an air marshal is fraught with many mysteries. To begin with, his real surname, first name and patronymic are completely different. At the birth of the future marshal, the name was Armenak Artemovich Khanferyants. He was born in 1902 in the village of Mets-Gaglar in Nagorno-Karabakh. In 1915, Armenak's father died at the front, and soon his mother also died. In order not to die of hunger, the teenager went as an assistant to a fishing artel based on the Sarah peninsula in the Caspian Sea, and a few months later he moved to the Baku oil fields, where he worked as a laborer. What Armenak

Khanferyants did in the revolutionary year of 1917 is not known for certain, as well as many other things in his biography. And in 1918, we see a young native of a remote Karabakh village in the ranks of one of the detachments defending Baku from Turkish troops advancing on the city. After the arrest, the marshal was accused of being a Dashnak detachment. However, he denied this and during the investigation, as in all his autobiographies, he insisted that the detachment was Red Guard, fighting for the Baku Commune, led by 26 legendary commissars. Then this detachment joined the regiment of Grigory Konstantinovich Petrov, the military commissar of the Baku region, who was shot near Krasnovodsk along with other Baku commissars in September 18. Shortly before the capture of Baku by the Turks, the detachment in which Khanferyants served was evacuated to Astrakhan. Before that, he was disarmed by the Socialist-Revolutionary Menshevik government that seized power in the city. According to the only biographer of Khudyakov, Major General Ashot Vagarshakovich Kazaryan, on the way the ship was fired upon by British military ships and damaged. Armenak ended up in the water and began to sink. He was saved by his company comrade Sergei Khudyakov. Together they reached Astrakhan, where they were

enrolled in the ranks of the 289th Infantry Regiment of the 39th Infantry Division of the Red Army, formed from former soldiers of the Petrov detachment. Khudyakov became the commander of the detachment of mounted scouts, and Khanferyants became his deputy. In 1919, during one of the battles with Denikin, the scout team was surrounded. Khudyakov was mortally wounded. A.V. Kazaryan conveys his last words addressed to his friend Armenak in this way: "Put on my communard (leather cap. - **B.S.**), brother, and lead the detachment forward. Let the enemies think I'm alive." After that, the scouts, led by Khanferyants, broke through to their own. In memory of his friend, Armenak took not only a communal apartment, but also his last name, first name and patronymic, and turned into Sergei Aleksandrovich Khudyakov. Perhaps Khanferyants Khudyakov spoke about this battle, where the real Khudyakov died, in his 1940 autobiography. It says that in April 1919 he was captured by the Whites, but after seven days he managed to escape along with other scouts. It is possible that the change of surname is somehow connected with this short stay in captivity. In any case, the future marshal never hid that his original surname was Khanferyants, so it is unlikely that the name change was due to the desire to hide some unseemly facts of the biography.

Interestingly, our hero inherited not only his friend's passport, but also his short biography. Since then, all encyclopedias have written that Air Marshal Sergey Alexandrovich Khudyakov was born on January 7, 1902 (and according to the old style - December 25, 1901) in the city of Volsk, Saratov province, in the family of a railway worker and in 1916 he graduated from the city elementary school. In reality, Marshal's father Artem Khanferyants was a poor peasant, and it is generally doubtful that before the revolution Armenak's education went beyond the parochial school. After all, from the age of 15, he was forced to earn a livelihood himself. It is also difficult to say whether Armenak Khanferyants was really born on January 7, 1902, or whether this is the date of birth of his friend Khudyakov. Together with his passport, Armenak acquired both a proletarian origin, so valued under the Soviet regime, and a fairly high educational qualification - the course of the city primary school gave a complete secondary education, which the boy from Metz-Gaglar obviously did not have.

Being in captivity did not prevent the freshly baked Khudyakov from making a very successful career in the ranks of the Red Army. At the end of 1919, he led a regimental team of mounted scouts. Then he commanded a platoon and was an assistant squadron commander. Together with his squadron and other units of the 11th Soviet Army, Khudyakov entered Baku in May 1920, and then fought the Musavat partisan detachments in Azerbaijan. In these battles, he was twice wounded and once shell-shocked. In April 1921, Khudyakov was sent to cavalry advanced training courses for officers in Tiflis. After completing the courses, on June 22, he was sent to the 1st Corps of the Red Cossacks in Ukraine. Due to the sharp reduction in the army, from 5.5 million people at the end of 1920 to 1,595 thousand people by the end of 1921 and to 516 thousand by the end of the 23rd, the former assistant squadron commander at first was able to get only the position of a platoon. However, he soon rose to the commander of a hundred. In 1925 he graduated from the cavalry advanced training courses for commanders (KKUKS) in Leningrad and became head of the regimental school. Khudyakov's last position in the cavalry was assistant regiment commander (in 1930 he even had to act as regimental commander). In 1931, the fate of

Sergei Alexandrovich underwent a sharp turn. The party, which he joined back in 1924 as part of the so-called "Leninist call", threw out the slogan: "Working people, build an air fleet!" The 29-year-old cavalryman was sent to study at the command faculty of the N.E. Zhukovsky. This faculty trained, in fact, not pilots, but staff workers and senior aviation commanders, and its graduates were able to fly very conditionally. True, Khudyakov did not neglect flight training either. Already in the first year of study at the academy, he flew 148 hours, including 8 at night. Later he practiced as an observer pilot. However, he never became an ace, and he never participated in air battles in his life. Nevertheless, Sergei-Armenak studied well and after graduating from the academy in 1936 he received an excellent certification: "Subject to graduation in the 1st category. Worthy of the rank of major. May be appointed to the post of squadron commander. However, Khudyakov, who could fly only on obsolete training aircraft, was still not entrusted with the command of the squadron. Otherwise, I'm afraid

his life could have ended in one of the plane crashes much earlier than it actually happened. After all, in the 1930s, the Soviet Air Force held a firm first place in the world both in terms of the total number of aircraft and in terms of their accident rate. Yes, and subordinates with a commander who had barely learned to fly would probably have had a hard time. To everyone's satisfaction, Sergei Alexandrovich received a rather non-dusty position - head of the operational department of the headquarters of the 5th heavy bomber brigade in the Air Force of the Belarusian Military District. There was no need to take to the air. Sit in the office and work with maps and documents - what's wrong? A year later, Khudyakov rose to the head of the operational department at the district aviation headquarters. The rapid ascent up the steps of the aviation hierarchy was associated with the large-scale repressions that began in the 37th year in the Red Army. The vacant vacancies were filled by young communist commanders, who at that moment were considered "trustworthy" and in no way connected **with** "Tukhachevsky and his gang." In 1938, Khudyakov-Khanferyants was promoted to colonel and appointed head of the logistics of the Air Force of the Belarusian Military District. In 1940, a new appointment followed - chief of staff of the Air Force of the Belarusian Special Military District. As you know, most of the district's aircraft in the very first days of the Great Patriotic War were destroyed at airfields and in air battles. Commander of the Air Force of the Western Front, Lieutenant General I.I. Kopets committed suicide. If he had not committed suicide, he would have shared the sad fate of the commander of the front, General of the Army D.G. Pavlov and other leaders of the front troops. But Khudyakov not only survived, but also went uphill sharply. In June 1941, he became chief of staff, and from February 1942,

commander of the Air Force of the Western Front. It cannot be said that Sergei Alexandrovich enriched the tactics or the operational art of the combat use of aviation in any way. Having never commanded aviation units, he knew about all this only by hearsay. But, obviously, he knew how to write reports well, where he painted the real and imaginary achievements of the "Stalin's falcons." That's why he stayed afloat. In October 1941, when the Soviet troops suffered a crushing defeat on the outskirts of Moscow and enemy aircraft completely dominated the air, Khudyakov was promoted to the rank of Major General of Aviation. So, Stalin did not

him guilty of the defeats of the first months of the war. Meanwhile, Soviet pilots were inferior to the aces of the Luftwaffe not only in the level of flying and combat skills, but also, no less important, in the level of organization and tactical and operational principles of using the Air Force. Here is what, for example, fellow countryman Khudyakov-Khanferyants, also a native of Nagorno-Karabakh, Marshal of the Soviet Union Ivan Khristoforovich Bagramyan, recalled: "The enemy not only outnumbered us in the number of combat aircraft, he also had a more successful organizational structure of his aviation, and a more flexible system of centralized control over operations."

Having a unified command, unified control and airfield support, the Germans easily concentrated the main efforts of aviation for massive combat use in those areas where, according to their plans, the fate of the most important battles and operations as a whole was decided. Our air forces on the fronts were

organizationally fragmented to the limit. The bulk of the combat aircraft of the fronts were part of the army aviation, the actions of which were planned and controlled mainly by the commanders of the combined arms armies based on the operational tasks facing them.



***Seated: M. Tukhachevsky, K. Voroshilov, A. Egorov. Standing:
S. Budyonny, V. Blucher***



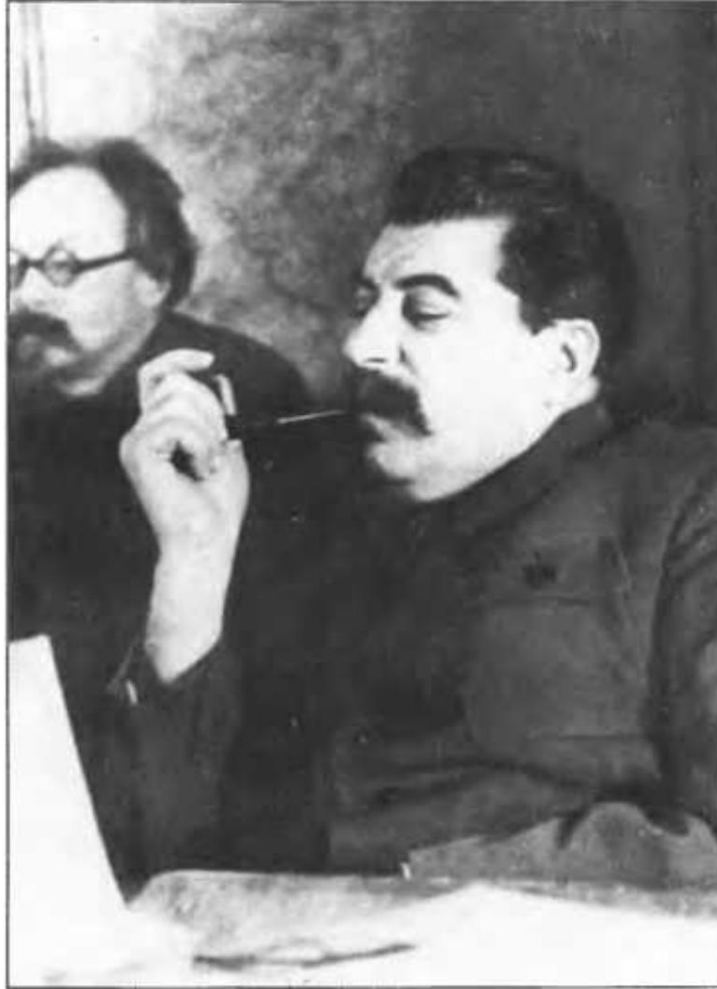
V. Blucher, M. Viktorov, M. Kalmykov



L. Egorov, 1920 L. Beria



V. Blucher M. Tukhachevsky



I. Stalin. 1936



*During the work of the XVII
Congress of the CPSU (b). Seated: G. K. Ordzhonikidze, I. V. Stalin,
V. M. Molotov, S. M. Kirov. Standing: A. S. Yenukidze, K. E. Voroshilov, L.
M. Kaganovich, V. V. Kuibyshev*



From left to right (sitting): Commander-in-Chief S. S. Kamenev, member of the Revolutionary Military Council of the Republic S. I. Gusev, commander of the troops of the Southwestern Front A. I. Yegorov, member of the Revolutionary Military Council of the 1st Cavalry Army K. E. Voroshilov. Standing: Chief of the Field Headquarters of the Revolutionary Military Council of the Republic P. P. Lebedev, Chief of Staff of the Southwestern Front N. N. Petin, Commander of the 1st Cavalry Army S. M. Budyonny, Head of the Operational Directorate of the Field Headquarters of the Revolutionary Military Council of the Republic B. M. Shaposhnikov. 1920



Revolutionary Military Council of the Caucasian Front. From left to right: S. I. Gusev, G. To Ordzhonikidze, M. N. Tukhachevsky, V. A. Trifonov. 1920

A relatively small number of aircraft were allocated to front-line aviation. Such organizational fragmentation in many cases made it extremely difficult to use them massively to solve the most important tasks of the operation.

Another major drawback of the organizational structure of our aviation in that period (we are talking about 1942. - **B.S.**) was the heterogeneous, mixed composition of aircraft in aviation divisions. Each unit included two assault and two fighter aviation regiments. This made it extremely difficult, and sometimes even outright excluded the possibility of a massive use of the available fighters, for example, to gain air supremacy over areas where decisive combat operations of our ground forces took place, or to deliver powerful strikes by a large number of attack aircraft and bombers against the most important groupings of enemy forces. ".

Bagramyan talked about the actions of aviation on the Southwestern Front. But the same picture was on the Western Front, where Khudyakov led the aviation operations. "Stalin's falcons" and their commanders were inferior to the aces of Hermann Goering, his generals and field marshals in all respects. The German General F.V. Mellenthin made such

impression of the combat activities of Soviet aviation: "The effectiveness of the actions of Russian aviation did not correspond to its numbers. Losses in experienced personnel suffered in the first months of the war were never made up, and mass-produced aircraft were much inferior in quality to our aircraft. Senior officers, apparently, could not master the principles of aviation combat operations in modern conditions. The Russians had virtually no strategic **air force**,

and the few strikes their long-range air strikes did not cause us any damage. Reconnaissance planes sometimes penetrated our location for 50-100 km, but fighters and bombers rarely flew more than 30 km beyond the front line. This was a great relief for us, because even in the most difficult periods of the war, the movement of troops and cargo in the rear areas was unhindered.

Russian aviation was used mainly for tactical tasks, and since the summer of 1943, Russian aircraft hung over the battlefield from morning to evening. The organization of interaction between aviation and ground forces was continuously improved; at the same time, the qualitative superiority of German aviation was gradually disappearing. But tactically, the Russians were always inferior to us, and their pilots could not compare **with** our pilots.

Strictly speaking, the quality of the aircraft of the Red Army Air Force was not inferior to the Luftwaffe from the very beginning of the war. Indeed, by June 22, 1941, the Soviet border districts had 1,540 new types of aircraft, while the Germans had only 1,830 combat vehicles on the Eastern Front. And the new Yak-1, MiG-3 and LaGG-Zne fighters were inferior or even superior to the main German Me-109 fighter (and there were only about 500 such aircraft in the invasion army). By the end of 1942, new types of combat vehicles accounted for almost 72% of the Soviet aviation fleet. That's just they knew how to fly badly. Because of this, and also because of the lack of gasoline, until the summer of 1943, Soviet fighters patrolled over the battlefield not at maximum, but at the most economical speed. And the numerical superiority of Soviet aviation persisted throughout almost the entire war, excluding only its first months, when almost all aviation of the border districts died, and replenishment was not yet

received. But it was nullified by the low level of training of pilots, as well as by the fact that defective aircraft often arrived at the front. For this, after the war, Khudyakov's immediate superior, Air Force Commander-in-Chief Air Chief Marshal A.A., was convicted. Novikov and the leadership of the People's Commissariat of the aviation industry.

Due to the large losses in the flight crew, Soviet pilots did not have time to gain experience and died before they could learn how to fight properly. We only have I.N. Kozhedub shot down 62 aircraft, and A.I. Pokryshkin - 59. And these are the best of the fighter pilots. And in the Luftwaffe, 104 pilots had more than 100 victories. Of these, only three fought on the Western Front, and the rest, including the absolute record holder Erich Hartman, who shot down 352 aircraft, acted against the Soviet Air Force. By the way, Hartman, who was captured by the Red Army, was sentenced to 20 years in labor camps "for causing damage to the Soviet economy, expressed in the destruction of 347 aircraft." According to this sentence, unique in world jurisprudence, he served ten and a half years and returned to his homeland only in 1955. To be fair, it should be noted that changes for the

better took place in the organization of Soviet aviation during the war. So, in May 1942, air armies were formed, each of which concentrated all the aviation operating on one of the fronts. Khudyakov, Chief of Staff of the Air Force, who was appointed to this position a month earlier, also had a hand in this reform. But soon, in June of the 42nd, at the request of the leadership of the Western Front, Sergei Alexandrovich went there to command the 1st Air Army. Here A.N. later met him. Ponomarev, who served as chief engineer of the army. Alexander Nikolaevich warmly recalled the commander: "We quickly found a common language with Lieutenant General S.A. Khudyakov (he received this title in March 1943. - **B.S.**). In his few free minutes, Sergei Alexandrovich shared with me his thoughts on the reorganization of front-line aviation in order to increase its mobility and reduce dependence on supply and support agencies. The commander was also thinking about how to improve communication with the ground forces. This is how a specific plan for the restructuring of the rear, operation and supply of aviation

troops. Khudyakov, a man of inexhaustible energy and determination, introduced these changes in the army at his own peril and risk, and when he became chief of the Air Force General Staff (in May 1945. - B.S.), he **tried** to extend them to all the Air Forces.

In general, all the few surviving reviews of memoirists about Khudyakov are positive. Here, for example, A.V. Kazaryan claims: "No one will remember that the commander of the 1st Army arranged an unreasonable dressing, pulled over trifles." But statements of this kind mean little by themselves. Indeed, in the Soviet historical and memoir literature about the Great Patriotic War, there were very few "whipping boys" - military leaders who were allowed to speak badly. Kulik, Pavlov, Zhukov during the disgrace under Khrushchev, a few more names. The rest were written only good or, in extreme cases, neutral. Yes, and praise is usually reduced to the most general words, from which it is difficult to understand what Khudyakov did so outstanding. The same Kazaryan writes: "Before the Battle of Kursk, the Air Force headquarters sent out a directive to the air armies on conducting an operation to weaken the enemy's operations. The directive was also received at the headquarters of the 1st Air Army. However, knowing the operational situation better, General Khudyakov did not agree with the tasks that were set in the directive. He put forward other tasks, achieved their approval and successfully completed them. So understand what kind of "operation to weaken operations" is and what tasks Sergei Alexandrovich set. However, the "concrete plan for the restructuring of the logistics, operation and supply of aviation troops", which A.N. mentions, is just as mysterious. Ponomarev. Khudyakov's only failure is also spoken of very dully. That is, probably not the only one, but about the

one about which I managed to find at least some information. Kazarian testifies: "On February 23, 1943, having incorrectly assessed the capabilities of the enemy, he (Khudyakov. - **B.S.**) decided to defeat enemy aircraft at front-line airfields with a sudden blow. The expectation of surprise did not materialize. The Commander-in-Chief of the Air Force gave the order to punish a number of aviation commanders. S.A. Khudyakov stood up for his subordinates by sending a telegram to Moscow with the following content: "I am to blame for everything. Von Greim - the commander of the German aviation group - deceived

me. I ask you to cancel the order on the undeserved punishment of ... officers.

Since the failed operation was carried out on the day of the Red Army, the approximate course of reasoning of Sergei Alexandrovich is seen as follows. The Germans will decide that the Russians will not attack on the holiday, they will relax, lose their vigilance. It was then that they were taken by surprise by Soviet bombers and attack aircraft. However, either the Germans meticulously served all the days, or the commander of the 6th Luftwaffe Corps, Robert von Grime, guessed the intention of the Soviet command, or there was a leak of information, but in the end it was not the German cars at the airfields that were destroyed, but the Soviet planes that attacked them. To Khudyakov's credit, it should be noted that he not only took full responsibility for the failure of the operation, but also paid tribute to the enemy. By the way, the defeat suffered by his army on February 23, 1943 did not prevent Sergei Alexandrovich from receiving the Order of Suvorov, 1st degree "for the skillful management of operations in the winter campaign of 1942-1943." Although the then offensive of the Western Front on the Rzhev-Vyazemsky bridgehead did not bring success: the Soviet strike groups were defeated, and then the Germans withdrew their troops without loss to a defensive line

prepared in advance in the rear. During the Battle of Kursk, Khudyakov, being the chief of the Air Force General Staff, coordinated the actions of the aviation of the Voronezh and Steppe fronts. In this battle, the losses of the Soviet Air Force significantly exceeded the losses of the Luftwaffe. For the entire Kursk Bulge, their ratio was 4.7:1. True, the command of the Soviet Air Force sharply overestimated the enemy's irretrievable losses, estimating them at 3,700 vehicles. In fact, in July - August 1943, the total irretrievable losses of the Luftwaffe, according to the German military archive in Freiburg, amounted to 3213 aircraft, of which only 1030 were on the Eastern Front. On the southern face of the arc, where Khudyakov was located, the situation was relatively more favorable for the Soviet aviation than in the north. Suffice it to say that in the Oryol offensive operation, which lasted 38 days, the air forces of the Central, Western and Bryansk fronts irretrievably lost about 2000 aircraft, and in the Belgorod-Kharkov offensive operation, however, which lasted only 21 days, the air forces of the Steppe and

The Voronezh fronts were missing more than 300 combat vehicles. Here, of course, the fact that such a talented commander as General von Greim commanded the forces of the Luftwaffe in Army Group Center, which was defending at Orel, could also play a role. No wonder he became the last German general whom Hitler promoted to field marshal in a burning Berlin, shelled by Soviet artillery. In October 1943, Sergei Alexandrovich

became a colonel general. And in November 1943, after the successful crossing of the Dnieper and the capture of Kyiv by the troops of those fronts, the aviation of which Khudyakov continued to lead, Air Force Commander Novikov introduced him to the rank of air marshal. This presentation is worth quoting in full. It reflects the military path of Sergei Alexandrovich in the Great Patriotic War: "Comrade. Khudyakov was appointed to the post of chief of staff of the Red Army Air Force for the first time in 1942 and again in 1943. Before that, he had been commander of the Air Force of the Western Front for more than a year. He has extensive experience in the use of aviation. For skillful leadership of military operations in the winter campaign of 1942-43 on the Western Front, he was awarded the Order of Suvorov, 1st degree. In the summer of 1943, he coordinated the actions of the aviation of the Voronezh and Steppe fronts in the Belgorod and, later, in the Kharkov and Kiev directions. He copes well with the duties assigned to him. Competent, cultured general. In addition to knowing aviation well, comrade. Khudyakov has good combined-arms training, which makes it possible for him to most fully link the interactions (as in the document. - **B.S.**) of aviation with ground forces on the battlefield. He knows staff work well, since before the war

he served in the headquarters of the district air force and for about a year during the Patriotic War he worked as the chief of staff of the air force of the front. Energetic and with a sense of responsibility performs the assigned work. Initiative. He supports the growth and development of the Air Force and, in this regard, he raised a number of questions that improve the combat skills and combat readiness of aviation units. Sometimes not direct enough and somewhat hasty in conclusions about people. As the chief of staff among his subordinates, he enjoys authority. Demanding of himself and his subordinates. Despite the fact that Com. Khudyakov is not a pilot, he has a strong desire to master flying, in this he has

successes. Independently flies the U-2, Yak-6, Li-2. Tov. Khudyakov knows how to defend his opinion. Hardworking and diligent.

Conclusion: The positions of chief of staff and deputy commander of the Red Army Air Force are quite appropriate. According to his knowledge and experience accumulated during the Patriotic War, he deserves the title of "air marshal". This submission was satisfied on August 19,

1944, when a decree was issued by the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR on awarding the marshal rank to Sergei Aleksandrovich Khudyakov. Pay attention, reader, for which Khudyakov was proposed to

be awarded the rank of marshal: for knowledge and experience accumulated during the war. As if Sergei Alexandrovich did not develop any air operations, did not win victories in battles. Or was Khudyakov really more concerned with logistics and aviation supplies? And again the mysteriously bureaucratic formula: "raised a number of questions that improve the combat training and combat readiness of aviation units." What does this mean? And did Novikov himself know what exactly he had in mind? In general, so far the biography of Khudyakov-Khanferyants is built from some clichés. Both in documents and in memoirs, the matter does not go beyond the most general phrases behind which it is very difficult to see a living person.

Here are the rumors about Khudyakov much more colorful. For example, the St. Petersburg researcher V. V. Marinichev cites in his article a story about how, during the Yalta Conference of the Heads of the Allied Powers in February 1945, "General Khudyakov (then already a marshal and one of the military experts of the Soviet delegation. - B. S. .) was all gloomily surprised - why did Stalin, of all the military officials, greet him alone and shake his hand for a long time, thanks for no one knows what? He never figured it out, and after the victory he was mercilessly shot - the joker-Supreme suspected that the insidious general was going to fly to America, it dawned on him that Khudyakov was flying an American Erocobre and was studying English language".

The fact that Stalin took Khudyakov with him to Yalta meant a high degree of confidence on the part of the leader in the marshal. Two other experts were, by the way, People's Commissar of the Navy, Admiral of the Fleet N.G. Kuznetsov and Deputy Chief of the General Staff of the Red Army General of the Army A.I. Antonov (after a few

days after the end of the conference, he replaced A.M. Vasilevsky as Chief of the General Staff). But Sergei Alexandrovich caused some discontent or suspicion on the part of the Supreme Commander already in Yalta, or something fatal happened to him later, we don't know today. However, it is unlikely that Khudyakov really mastered the Erocobra. As we remember, at least from the text of the submission to the rank of marshal, he could only fly on training aircraft. And the American fighter "Erocobra" was even more difficult to master than the Soviet fighters, on which Sergei Alexandrovich never learned to fly confidently. In the legend, however, as if the desire to learn English ruined the marshal, perhaps, the fact was reflected in the fact that after the arrest Khudyakov was accused of collaborating with British intelligence. Marinichev also cites a

curious statement by Pokryshkin, made in one television interview: "Life is a struggle! And fight with whom? With the authorities. The authorities don't fly, go and prove to them that you won't gain much according to the instructions." The researcher illustrated these words with the following example: "Our Air Force leadership, for example, had to prove for two years that fighters should fly in pairs." Khudyakov, a cavalryman in the first military profession, was just one of those bosses who could fly skillfully very conditionally. As one of the leaders of Soviet aviation during the war years, he certainly bears his share of responsibility for the fact that the "Stalinist falcons" lost to the aces of Goering in all respects. Even in the last year and a half of the war, when due to a lack of fuel, German aircraft appeared less and less in the sky, the Luftwaffe command of its young pilots, who had just graduated from college, first sent them to the Eastern Front. There they could fire on in relatively calm conditions, and then come to grips with the Anglo-American aircraft, which mercilessly bombed the territory of the Reich. By the way, until the last days of the war, the German aviation command did not neglect the combat training of pilots. In the Soviet Air Force, most pilots fought with the enemy after completing accelerated courses, having barely learned to fly. And the results were consistent. Contrary to the popular opinion in Soviet historiography, the Luftwaffe suffered its main losses - about 70% - in the fight against the Western allies, and by no means

on the Eastern Front. The historian of German aviation in World War II O. Greffrat notes that even in the last period of the war in the East, "despite the serious superiority of the Russians in the air, German aviation still remained the backbone of defense, covering ground forces with its fighters from attacks by Russian attack aircraft." It took two years for Soviet aviation to copy the German battle formations. V. Marinichev rightly notes that the fault for this lies entirely with the Air Force command, and not with the rank and file commanders of squadrons and regiments: radio, and only in close combat formations did the commanders have any opportunity to control the actions of their subordinates, at least on the principle of "do as I do"; it was not in Soviet traditions to give subordinates the opportunity to act independently.-B.S.) . This fettered their actions and deprived them of independence - everyone was forced to stick to each other and constantly monitor the elder. German pilots flew in pairs, trying to attack vertically. The mistake of the first was corrected by the second, repeating his maneuver. The minimal connection of fighters with each other allowed them to improvise in battle, squeezing out all its

positive qualities from the car. To comprehend this, the leadership of our Air Force took two years. But Soviet pilots encountered this tactic a year and a half before the German attack, during the Soviet-Finnish war of 1939-1940. Then the Finnish pilots, who flew in pairs, fought much more successfully than the Soviet ones. But the experience didn't work out.

After the victory over Germany, Sergei Alexandrovich was entrusted with the command of the 12th Air Army in the fleeting war against Japan. A week after the start of the Soviet invasion of Manchuria, the Japanese capitulated, so the Red Army was left to take prisoners and trophies. Khudyakov landed his transport planes directly on enemy airfields. Several dozen paratroopers got out of the planes, and thousands of Japanese garrisons surrendered to them. After the end of the Soviet-Japanese war, the marshal commanded the aviation of the Far East for several months. Then Sergei Alexandrovich was summoned to Moscow and

December 14, 1945 was arrested. The arrest without the sanction of the prosecutor was carried out by the Smersh military counterintelligence agencies. Its head is Colonel General V.S. Abakumov soon became head of the Ministry of State Security. He was one of the architects of the Khudyakov

case. For two months, the marshal stood firm and did not plead guilty. Then it was broken. On February 19, 1946, Sergei Alexandrovich agreed with the statements of the investigators that he was a hardened English spy, that in 1918 he served in the Dashnak detachment, and already being a marshal "abused his official position." Only the last point was true here. Khudyakov, like many other generals and marshals, suffered from "trophy fever". **And** in Germany, and in Manchuria, he took furniture, carpets, paintings. Unfortunately, unlike Marshal Zhukov and the same Abakumov, the inventory of trophy valuables confiscated from Khudyakov has not yet been published. Maybe she didn't survive. But, like other Soviet military leaders, Sergei Alexandrovich's trophy affairs were only a small appendage to much more serious political articles.

In March 1946, the prosecutor's sanction was finally received and a warrant was issued for the arrest of the marshal, who had been held in a dungeon for more than three months without any legal grounds. On August 22, 1946, Khudyakov was officially charged with treason and abuse of office. The investigation lasted four years. Only on April 18, 1950, Marshal Khudyakov appeared before the Military Collegium of the Supreme Court of the USSR. On the same day, the trial, which took place without the participation of the defense, the prosecution and without calling witnesses, ended. Sergei Alexandrovich was found guilty on all counts and sentenced to death. What exactly was he charged with?

The investigation claimed that Khanferyants, while serving in the Red Guard detachment in the city of Baku, was recruited by the English officer Wilson. On the instructions of British intelligence, Armenak deserted from the Red Guard detachment and joined the Dashnak detachment, which was subordinate to the Socialist-Revolutionary-Menshevik government of the city (this government, called the Dictatorship of the Central Caspian, overthrew the Bolshevik government headed by S.G. Shaumyan). Together with the Dashnaks, Khanferyants allegedly "took part in th

arrested 26 Baku commissars from the city of Baku to the place of their execution in

the city of Krasnovodsk. The reader, already familiar with some of the details of Khudyakov's biography, must be surprised. If a person joined a detachment created by the Armenian national Dashnaktsutyun party, which is close in ideology to the Russian Mensheviks, it means that, first of all, he recognized himself as an Armenian. But it is somehow difficult to imagine that a convinced Armenian nationalist who participated in the execution of the Baku Bolsheviks suddenly voluntarily turned into a Red Army soldier with a completely Russian name, patronymic and surname - Sergey Alexandrovich Khudyakov. To explain this oddity, the court again needed the Secret Intelligence Service: in the same 18th year, Khanferyants "established contact with the British intelligence agent Voskresensky, on whose instructions he repeatedly penetrated the location of Red Army units for espionage purposes. In the future, Khudyakov was associated for a long time in espionage activities with British intelligence agents Karpushin-Zorin, Lukava and Mosin, who were subsequently convicted. As a makeweight, as I said,

there was an abuse of official position: "During the Patriotic War, using his official position, Khudyakov appropriated a large amount of trophy property and other valuables." This paragraph of the verdict, perhaps, corresponded to the truth. In any case, the chief of staff of the Air Force, who had all front-line aviation at his service, had practically unlimited possibilities for exporting trophies to the USSR. But Khudyakov's participation in the execution of 26 Baku commissars and espionage in

favor of England is pure fantasy. But the analysis of these accusations helps to understand why Sergei Alexandrovich was arrested after all. First thought: Abakumov, on behalf of Stalin, began a dig against the immediate superior of Khudyakov, the Air Force Commander-in-Chief, Air Chief Marshal A.A. Novikov, who was indeed taken a few months later. However, at least Alexander Alexandrovich was charged with treason, but in a completely different form. Novikov was accused of deliberate sabotage, expressed in the adoption of defective aircraft. But Khudyakov was not accused of such a thing, and his case developed completely independently of the Novikov case. What was it in

the real reason for the tragedy that happened to Sergei Alexandrovich?
I think that here

Stalin was hunting for an even larger beast. Such a conclusion can be drawn by getting acquainted with the materials of the case on the rehabilitation of Sergei-Armenak Aleksandrovich-Artemovich Khudyakov-Khanferyants. On August 18, 1954, the Military Collegium of the Supreme Court considered the conclusion of the Prosecutor General's Office. It said that Khudyakov's testimony, given during the investigation, about his service in the Dashnak detachment and connections with British intelligence "has not been confirmed by any objective data", and the witnesses interrogated during the preliminary investigation "did not give direct evidence about Khudyakov's criminal activities." None of the trials of persons involved in the death of the Baku commissars that took place in 1920-1927, Khudyakov's name was never mentioned in any capacity. There is no evidence that he was an English spy. Karpushin-Zorin and Mosin were indeed convicted, but not for ties with British intelligence, but for "participation in a military conspiracy." The only one charged with cunning was "anti-Soviet agitation". In their testimony, all three never mentioned the name of Khudyakov-Khanferyants. And their deeds were as exaggerated as the marshal's. In the memoirs of the former head of the Main Directorate of Security, Lieutenant

General Nikolai Sergeevich Vlasik, it is noted that "there were, sadly, betrayals (Aviation Marshal Khudyakov). Not everything was uprooted at the time. But the most disastrous and dangerous thing was that among people, especially close to Stalin, there was such a terrible enemy and traitor as Beria. Since the case of Khudyakov was deposited in the memory of the head of the Stalinist guard, it can be assumed that it was under the close attention of Joseph Vissarionovich. And since, following Khudyakov, Vlasik immediately mentions Beria as an "enemy of the people," it cannot be ruled out that it was originally planned, when Stalin and Abakumov were constructing an imaginary conspiracy, to create a bunch of Khudyakov - Mikoyan - Beria. After all, Anastas Ivanovich was really close to Lavrenty Pavlovich, and even in June 53, at the fateful Plenum for Beria, as we will see later, he proposed not to arrest the chief of the Ministry of Internal Affairs accused of conspiracy, but only to move him to a less responsible post

oil minister. In 1946, Mikoyan and Beria, unlike Khudyakov, were lucky. Stalin still needed them, and he did not turn Anastas Ivanovich and Lavrenty Pavlovich into conspirators. These members of the Politburo were still needed by the "Kremlin mountaineer". True, according to Khrushchev's memoirs, shortly before his death, Iosif Vissarionovich seriously considered the possibility of turning Mikoyan, Voroshilov, Beria and Molotov into British spies as part of the planned new purge in the upper echelon of power. Yes, but death got in the way. Former Deputy Minister of State Security and Head of

the Investigative Department of the MGB, Colonel M.D. Ryumin, who was arrested shortly after Stalin's death, testified during interrogations on June 10–13, 1953, that investigator Gerasimov, who interrogated Khudyakov, forced him to confess to belonging to the British agents, and also to the fact that "allegedly he took some part in the execution of the Baku commissars". According to Ryumin, Gerasimov systematically beat the marshal. The fact that physical measures were applied to Khudyakov was also testified during interrogation by the former investigator M.T. Likhachev. Gerasimov himself told Ryumin that Abakumov, in a conversation with Anastas Ivanovich Mikoyan, clarified the circumstances of the arrest and execution of 26 Baku commissars, in order to later enter these data into the protocol as confessions allegedly made voluntarily by Khudyakov.

That's where the dog is buried! Stalin decided that it was time to get hold of a solid compromising evidence on an ally in the Politburo, comrade Mikoyan. I'm afraid that it was not trophy fever, proximity to Novikov, who fell into disgrace, or some shortcomings in the leadership of the Air Force that killed Khudyakov. No, the Armenian nationality and presence in Baku in 1918, at the same time as Anastas Ivanovich, became fatal for Sergey-Armenak Aleksandrovich Artemovich. Stalin and Abakumov simply needed a high-ranking military man who could somehow be connected with Mikoyan in one conspiracy. Khudyakov-Khanferyants was ideally suited for this purpose. And it was not difficult for him to sew espionage in favor of the British. After all, before the capture of Baku by the Turks, there was a small English detachment there. Why doesn't one of the British officers recruit a 16 year old Armenian boy. Perhaps, in big people it will come out. And in Yalta in February 1945, Khudyakov met with Churchill and the British generals. Let

will try to prove that he did not give them secret information and did not receive secret instructions from the owners. Maybe he and Mikoyan were instructed to stage a coup, to bomb the Kremlin from the air, to destroy Stalin. It will quite pull on a big political process, like those that were in the 30s. It was not for nothing that Iosif Vissarionovich,

back in 1935, shortly after Ordzhonikidze's suicide, insinuatingly told Mikoyan: "The story of how 26 Baku commissars were shot and only one of them, Mikoyan, survived, is dark and confusing. And you, Anastas, do not force us to unravel this story. In his memoirs, which first appeared in print in the 1960s, Anastas Ivanovich defended the version that was voiced in the 1920s at the trials of the death of the leaders of the Baku commune. As if the SR-Menshevik government in Ashgabat, when Shaumyan and his comrades fell into its hands, took advantage of the list, which turned out to be in the possession of one of the arrested. The fact is that before the departure from Baku, the commissars were arrested by the city authorities. Their list was kept by the senior in the cell. Mikoyan, without being arrested, was not included in the ill-fated list. In total, there were 25 people there, including completely random people, such as the headquarters clerk. To them, the authorities in Krasnovodsk, where the steamer arrived from Baku, added the 26th, the well-known Bolshevik journalist Tatevos Amirov. Mikoyan, although he was arrested in Krasnovodsk, did not fall under execution, since he was absent from the Baku prison list. I will say that I have heard something else. Once in the 70s, I was standing at the counter of a bookstore and looking through Mikoyan's memoirs. Nearby stood a man, by appearance - an Armenian, and joyfully said: "Ah, Mikoyan, so he is a Dashnak, recently installed. That is why they didn't finish him together with Shaumyan." Perhaps this rumor was a weak echo of the Khudyakov case, where Mikoyan also appeared? In any case, I don't see any publications about Anastas Ivanovich's connections with the Dashnaks

did not happen.

It can be assumed that in the end, Stalin decided not to initiate cases against Mikoyan. And Khudyakov was condemned as a simple English spy and participant in the execution of the Baku commissars, but the unfortunate was not dragged into any military conspiracy. And they were in no hurry to shoot. In all encyclopedias, the date of Khudyakov's death is indicated

April 18, 1950 is the day of his quick and wrong trial. However, military lawyers A.I. Muranov and V.E. Zvyagintsev, in his book "Dossier on the Marshal", dedicated to closed trials of the 20s and 50s, claims that Khudyakov was shot between August 18 and 23, 1950. If this is true, then, perhaps, additional evidence was sought from the marshal against one of the high-ranking officials, or they thought to use it in another trial. But then they still carried out the sentence. Back in 1953, the widow and two children of Khudyakov returned to Moscow, in 1951 they were repressed as "members of the family of a traitor to the Motherland." However, they could not move into their apartment. An MGB officer already lived there.

GRIGORY KULIK DEMOTATED MARSHAL

Here is what Grigory Ivanovich Kulik wrote about himself in his autobiography dated January 5, 1939: "I was born in 1890 on the Dudnikovo farm, near the city of Poltava, b. Poltava province and district (now the Poltava region) in the family of a poor peasant. I don't remember my father because he died the year I was born.

The childhood of the future marshal was difficult. An orphan *from* birth, Grisha early learned hard peasant labor. Of the 9 children in the family, he was the youngest. Kuliks owned a dwarf allotment of two acres of land. After the marriage of the older brothers, they received their own allotments, and only half a dozen remained with Grigory and his mother. "In 1906 or 1907," Kulik noted in his autobiography, "my mother bought an additional two acres of land through a bank with an installment plan of 50 years, and I worked on this land until being drafted into the tsarist army, that is, until 1912." The harvest was barely enough to feed himself and make the due payments on the loan.

In the army, Kulik served in the artillery, going from a private to a senior fireworker (as an artillery non-commissioned officer was called), he received a platoon under his command. Throughout the First World War, he stayed at the front. But even before the war, Grigory Ivanovich was involved in the revolutionary movement. Here is what can be read in connection with this in his autobiography: "Revolutionary views, blood hatred for the tsarist autocracy, landlords, officers and priests, I developed back in 1903, under the following circumstances. The region of Poltava region in 1903 was engulfed by peasant uprisings, and at that time the estate of our landowner was destroyed. As a boy, I saw how cruelly and brutally the peasants were dealt with by the punitive detachments for these peasant uprisings, trapping the peasants to death. In 1905, my brother (18 years older than me), who at that time

worked as a worker in the railway workshops at the Belgorod station, was arrested for participating in a strike, and was imprisoned in the Kursk prison.

In 1906, my brother, with a group of workers arrested in this case, was tried behind closed doors. At this court it was allowed to attend one person from the relatives, and from our family I went to the court. This trial, which lasted three weeks, was my first party school, which further developed in me hatred for the tsarist autocracy and its henchmen. My brother was sentenced to two years and eight months, and he served his sentence in the Peter and Paul Fortress. After the suppression of the peasant uprising and the arrest of my brother, revolutionary-minded students worked in our area, who, in all likelihood, knowing about the arrest and imprisonment of my brother in a fortress, became close to me, and I helped in their work. My help to these students consisted in the fact that I hid revolutionary

literature, and there was one case - weapons, and also attended May Day meetings, which were organized in the forest near the city of Poltava, about 10 kilometers from our farm. The future marshal, as a boy, had a chance to learn the cruelty of the punishers. Maybe that's why he considered cruelty towards subordinates to be commonplace.

Participation in May Day meetings and possession of illegal literature were only the first steps of a peasant youth in the revolutionary field. The beginning of his activity as a professional revolutionary, shortly after being called up for military service, Grigory Ivanovich describes somewhat vaguely in his autobiography: "About about 10 times in the period from the end of 1912 to the front, i. I was at May Days organized by the revolutionaries, and during the dispersal of one of these May Days I was beaten with a whip by the Cossacks, as a result of which my back hurt for about two months and I could not, in order not to impersonate myself, apply for medical assistance.

In the same period, that is, at the beginning of 1913, in the city of Poltava, I joined the local revolutionary organization, and this decision was the result of the fact that I also experienced the oppression and arbitrariness that took place in the barracks and experienced the soldiers. . If you now ask me what kind of organization it was, Menshevik or Socialist-Revolutionary, I simply find it difficult to answer precisely, since I was very poorly versed in politics at that time. What satisfied me at that time in the demands of these revolutionaries? The overthrow of the tsarist auto

transfer of land to peasants for a fee and power to the constituent assembly.

Here Kulik is cunning. He remembered very well that he had joined the Socialist-Revolutionary Party, which in 1939 was in itself a dubious item in his biography. I wonder how it is that a person who joined a revolutionary organization declares that at that moment he "understood very poorly" in politics? After all, linking one's fate with the revolution is a conscious political choice. But the trouble is that with this choice the future marshal was slightly mistaken. In 1950, at a trial, Grigory Ivanovich testified that "he joined the Socialist-Revolutionary Party in 1913 at the depot of the Poltava station," and became a member of the Bolshevik Party on October 22, 1917, just three days before the start of the socialist revolution in Petrograd.

Kulik described his revolutionary activities at the front in his autobiography as follows: "In 1914, with my departure to the front, I lost all contact with the revolutionaries before the February Revolution (it is permissible to doubt this; it is more logical to assume that in 1939 Grigory Ivanovich tried in every possible way to downplay the importance of his membership in the Socialist-Revolutionary Party. - **B.S.**). I always instilled hatred for the tsarist autocracy, for capitalists, officers and priests among the soldiers, and this later showed up when I was elected chairman of the soldiers' committee.

The February Revolution found me at the front, where I was immediately elected chairman of the battery committee, then the divisional and brigade committee, and before the October Revolution I was already chairman of the soldiers' committee of the 9th Infantry Division. Through the newspaper Trench Pravda, he began to get

acquainted with the Bolshevik Party. In April 1917 I was elected as a delegate to the congress of the Western Front, which took place in Minsk. At this congress, for the first time, I heard the speeches of the Bolsheviks, and then the Bolshevik worldview was finally formed in me, and at this congress I defended the line of the Bolsheviks.

In 1917, after returning from the Congress of Delegates of the Western Front, I carried on revolutionary work more confidently. At the time of the June offensive in 1917 on Krevo and Smorgon, being the chairman of the divisional commission of the 9th Infantry Division, I spoke to the soldiers against the offensive, for which I was arrested, and

soon, under pressure from the mass of soldiers, he was released, and the division was transferred to the Romanian front, as a politically unreliable division.

In October 1917, during the withdrawal of troops from the front, I, with a group of armed soldiers, went on foot home to Ukraine, where the Ukrainian Rada was in power at that time. These soldiers later became the main core of the Red Guard detachment I created.

In the early days of November 1917 in Poltava, I joined the underground, the Bolshevik Party (probably, here Grigory Ivanovich uses the dating according to the new style; the time of his entry into the Bolshevik Party, October 22, 1917, according to the old style, corresponds to November 4, according to the new style style - **B.S.**). In the same period, on the instructions of the party organization, I began to form a partisan

detachment. During the First World War, Grigory Ivanovich Kulik, as far as I know, was neither wounded nor awarded. In any case, in his autobiography, he does not mention any wounds or awards in 1914-1917. But Kulik certainly knew how to lead the soldiers, since he rose so quickly from the platoon commander to the chairman of the divisional soldier's committee. And, apparently, he was already very tired of the war, if already in June the future marshal, unlike most of the Social Revolutionaries in the soldiers' committees, actively opposed the offensive that was being prepared on the orders of the Provisional Government and was even arrested for this.

Kulik actively participated in the Civil War literally from the first days. His detachment fought with the troops of the Central Rada and, going to the rear of the Ukrainian troops, ensured the capture of Poltava by the Red Guards. In January 18, Grigory Ivanovich took Kiev with his fighters, and a month and a half later he covered the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Ukraine from the onslaught of the German and Austro-Hungarian armies that came to the aid of the Central Rada in order to seize Ukrainian bread and lard, steel and

coal. In April 1918, the Red Guard detachments that retreated from Ukraine were united into the 5th Ukrainian Army under the command of K.E. Voroshilov. At the headquarters of this army at the Rodakovo station near Lugansk, Kulik met for the first time with the future "First Marshal". Friendship with him and with Stalin, who took care of Voroshilov, played a big role.

role in the subsequent rapid career of Grigory Ivanovich. Kulik was chosen as chief of the army's artillery. Concurrently, he commanded the Kharkov battery. Then the battle began for Verdun on the Volga - Tsaritsyn, which was attacked by the Cossacks of the Don ataman P.N. Krasnov. "When the

5th Ukrainian Army approached Tsaritsyn in June 1918," Kulik wrote in his autobiography, "this army and all the separate detachments of the city of Tsaritsyn under the leadership of Comrade. Stalin and comrade. Voroshilov were reorganized into the 10th Army, and I was appointed chief of artillery, under the leadership of Comrade. Stalin participated in the defense of Tsaritsyn against the whites and

their defeat. In the depths of his soul, Grigory Ivanovich believed that he had played an almost decisive role in those battles. It was he who put forward the idea of concentrating all the artillery in one decisive sector, where the offensive of the Don Army was

crushed on October 17, 1918. "In March 1919," Kulik continued the story of his life path, "after being wounded, I served as provincial military commissar and head of the Kharkov garrison for a month and a half until I finally recovered (in total, during the Civil War, Grigory Ivanovich was wounded five times and twice shell-shocked - **B.S.**). During this period of time, being the chairman of the troika, he directly supervised the suppression of the Menshevik and Social Revolutionary uprisings in Belgorod, Sumy and Kharkov. The peasant son Grigory Kulik, himself a member of the Socialist-Revolutionary Party in the recent past, now mercilessly dealt with the peasant brothers who had rebelled because of the arbitrariness of the food detachments.

Then there was the struggle with the detachments of Grigoriev, a former tsarist officer who at one time served in the Central Rada, then in the Red Army, and now was going to go over to Denikin with his people. "In May 1919," Kulik recalled, "during the uprising of the Grigoriev gangs, I was appointed head of the newly created artillery under the command of Comrade. Voroshilov army. For the liquidation of the Grigoriev uprising, he was awarded the first Order of the Red Banner. After the defeat of

Grigoriev's gangs, this army in June 1919 was reorganized into the 14th Army under the command of Comrade. Voroshilov, and I am appointed chief of artillery of this army.

But soon Grigory Ivanovich became the victim of an acute conflict between Voroshilov and Stalin with the chairman of the Revolutionary Military Council Trotsky, who sought to put an end to partisanship in the Red Army and force communist commanders and commissars to reckon with military specialists from among former officers and generals of the tsarist service. "With the translation of Comrade. Voroshilov from the 14th army, - Kulik noted sadly in his autobiography, - on the orders of Trotsky, I was removed from the post of chief of artillery of the army and appointed commissar of artillery of the 14th army, and a former officer was appointed instead of me, who later turned out to be a traitor who was shot. Only with the arrival in the 14th army of comrade. Sergo Ordzhonikidze, at the direction of Comrade. Stalin, who was at that moment on the Southern Front, I was again appointed chief of artillery of the 14th Army.

It seems that this episode was only to strengthen Kulik's position in the eyes of Stalin and Voroshilov. After all, Grigory Ivanovich suffered from the main mythologized villain Trotsky. But the fact that Ordzhonikidze took part in his reinstatement in 1939 was no longer a plus, but a minus. Few insiders knew that two years earlier "dear Sergo" had committed suicide due to a bitter conflict with Stalin.

As part of the 14th Army, Kulik fought the White Volunteer Army advancing on Moscow. **And** again he was successful. "As part of the 14th Army, as the head of the artillery of the army, uniting all the artillery of the army, I participated in the defeat of the army of General Mai-Maevsky near Kromy." The most remarkable thing here is the fourfold use of the word "army" in one sentence. The general education of Grigory Ivanovich was limited to four classes of the parochial school, and the marshal did not get along very well with the Russian language. But in military affairs, he understood something. In any case, he knew how to concentrate the bulk of the artillery at the right time and in the right place.

Voroshilov, who became a member of the Revolutionary Military Council of the 1st Cavalry Army, did not forget Kulik. In June 1920, Grigory Ivanovich became the head of artillery at Budyonny. For the battles against Denikin, the Poles and Wrangel, he received the second Order of the Red Banner. In 1921-1922, Kulik, heading the artillery of the North Caucasian Military District, commanded by Budyonny, smashed the rebellious Don villages. He even

was the chairman of the revolutionary troika, mercilessly punishing rebels.

A suitable social background and friendship with Voroshilov, Budyonny and Stalin himself contributed to the rapid promotion of Kulik to the highest rungs in the military hierarchy. In 1923, Grigory Ivanovich was sent to study at the Military Academy of the Red Army. According to the marshal, this was the first school where he received

"thorough political and military knowledge".

But Kulik did not have time to finish his course at the academy, when in November 1924 he was appointed assistant chief of artillery of the Red Army. At the end of 1925, he was transferred as deputy chairman to the Military Industrial Committee of the Supreme Economic Council, where Kulik was engaged in the production of artillery weapons. At the end of 1926, another promotion followed: Grigory Ivanovich was made head of the Artillery Directorate of the Red Army. In 1929, in honor of the 10th anniversary of the defense of Tsaritsyn, he was awarded the third Order of the Red Banner. In order to gain experience in commanding combat units, Kulik commanded a selected Moscow Proletarian Division for a year, from the end of 1929 to October 1930. Then he was sent to the Special Faculty of the Frunze Academy, from which Grigory Ivanovich graduated in 1932. Then the future marshal was appointed commander-commissar of the 3rd rifle corps.

After the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War in 1936, Kulik was sent there to help the gunners of the Republican army. For Spanish deeds, he was awarded the Order of Lenin in 1937, and at the end of that year he was appointed head of the Red Army Artillery Directorate. Immediately after returning from Spain, Grigory Ivanovich testified to his own reliability at

a meeting of the Main Military Council, which discussed the case of Tukhachevsky and his comrades from June 1 to 4, 1937. Kulik told how Gamarnik and other "enemies of the people" tried to discredit him: "I never went to Gamarnik. That's when they called Govorukhin, so they wanted to present the case. I drank wine and invited a woman (before drinking and the fair sex, Kulik was a big hunter. - **B.S.**), so they wanted to compromise me (laughter). Not in that sense. They said that I was a mediocre person. Well, what is there some unterishka,

fireworks. Uborevich called me "fireworks" like that. And the leader of the Ukrainian Yakir never gave a hand. When Belov conducted an exercise last autumn, they all ran together to compromise this exercise.

I was mistaken in Gorbachev, he played a provocative role, in the military
In regards to this, he is a mediocre Cork - generally a fool in military
affairs. Voice from the seat: Suppose he
is not a fool. Kulik: No, Kork is an illiterate person in military affairs, technicians
does not know.

Budyonny: Chief of Staff of the Moscow District Stepankov is a bastard.
The first bastard is Gamarnik. Of course,

Kulik then did not even suspect that in thirteen years he himself would be
in the place of Tukhachevsky, Yakir and Uborevich. And the dislike for those
arrested, who, unlike Kulik, belonged not to the "cavalry", but to the "infantry
clan", with a large stratum of former officers, was quite sincere in the former
fireworker. The story of the "compromise" will surely cause laughter not only
among the members of the Main Military Council, but also among today's
readers. But the confrontation between the "cavalrymen", for the most part from
former non-commissioned officers, and the more educated "infantrymen" was a
harsh reality. How it was resolved, we have already seen in the example of
Tukhachevsky. Now Kulik took the vacant post of head of the Artillery Directorate
of the Red Army. The predecessor of Grigory Ivanovich N.A. Efimov, together
with his deputy G.I. Bondarev was arrested back in May 1937.

Already after the Great Patriotic War and the demolition and execution of
Kulik, they tried to lay on him almost all the responsibility for miscalculations in
the preparation of Soviet artillery for war, as well as for a number of failures of
the 41st year. But was Grigory Ivanovich really to blame, who did not live to see
his memoirs and therefore was deprived of the opportunity to answer his critics
in the uniform of a general and marshal? Immediately after the first trial of him,
on

February 18, 1942, Kulik, who had just turned from a marshal into a major
general, sent a letter to Stalin. He tried to justify himself: "Comrade. Stalin! The
last time I visited you, you told me about my armaments management. I consider
myself responsible for armament since June 37

of the year to June 20, 1941, both in terms of quantity and quality, since I carried out the entire weapon system with new models. I ask you to appoint an authoritative impartial commission, which should establish how much I accepted weapons from my predecessors and how much I surrendered. How was the army provided according to the deployment plan according to the norms approved by the Government, taking into account the order plan for 41 years, the quality of the weapons of the new systems adopted by the army under my leadership. I especially ask you to open the order plan passage systems for each year: what I proposed and what they actually claimed and what we received; as a general rule, after long ordeals that lasted less than 4–5 months in the People's Commissariats, in the State Planning Commission, in various government commissions and subcommittees and in the Defense Committee, we were given no more than 60–65 percent of what we asked for. The industry also curtailed this approved plan with its shortcomings, which amounted to 20-30 percent,

depending on what type of weapon. I defended the interests of the army stubbornly, on this issue you can find dozens of my complaints, requests every year in the apparatus of the State Planning Commission, the Defense Committee, the State Control, in the People's Commissariats of Industry and in your Central Committee of the CPSU. I think no one will be able to deny how I defended the interests of the army, where our plan of orders passed, **from** members of the Government.

I was surprised when you told me about the PPSH that we asked little, and the commission (comrade Molotov was the chairman) at the suggestion of Comrade Voznesensky (chairman of the State Planning Commission - B.S.) cut us **off**. Rifles were also cut off in the same commission. I defended, the former People's Commissar Comrade Timoshenko did not support me, because he knew little about these issues, and I was left alone. I am only telling you about one example. You can find dozens of examples when I was able to report to you, and you carried out the decision of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of the Soviet Union on a separate type of weapon, and when the year began, the number was cut off with the reference that there was no metal.

A few months before the war, I proposed to transfer the powder, equipment, and small arms industries according to the mob plan. My proposal is in the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of the Soviet Union, Comrade Molotov and the Defense Committee, but then they rejected it, and also offered a large program for the production of tanks for the 40th and 41st years, she also

did not pass, this document is in the Defense Committee for my and comrade Fedorenko (head of the Main Armored Directorate. - **B.S.**) signature, also did not pass due to a lack of armor and engines (amazingly, but already in the 42-43rd armor and engines turned out to be enough to produce much more tanks than Kulik suggested - perhaps at the expense of postscripts? - **B.S.**).
Tov. Stalin! I ask you to order to open in detail:

who was

the culprit of the slowdown in armaments, and you will see, but not the NPO."

Indeed, Kulik was not guilty of many of the sins that were attributed to him. The point here was most often the unrealistic plans of the military department, for the implementation of which there was not enough metal and explosives. Here, other leaders of the People's Commissariat of Defense and the military industry shared the blame with Grigory Ivanovich. In general, the artillery for the Great Patriotic War was well prepared. Chief Marshal of Artillery Nikolai Nikolaevich Voronov, in his memoirs "In the Service of the Military", published in 1963, did not spare black colors to characterize his former boss, Marshal of the Soviet Union Grigory Ivanovich Kulik: "G.I. Kulik was a man of little organization, who thought a lot about himself, and considered all his actions to be infallible. It was often difficult to understand what he wanted, what he was trying to achieve. He considered the best method of his work to keep his subordinates at bay (Voronov was the first deputy head of the Main Artillery Directorate and head of artillery of the Red Army. - **B.S.**). His favorite saying when setting tasks and instructions was: "Prison or orders." In the morning he usually called in a lot of performers, very vaguely set tasks and, threateningly asking "I understand?", Ordered to leave the office. Everyone who received assignments usually came to me and asked for clarifications and instructions. Something, but an excess of modesty, Nikolai Nikolayevich clearly did not suffer. Voronov also recalled Kulik's trip to Khalkhin Gol in the summer of 1939, at the height of the Soviet-Japanese conflict: "Our advanced units were located across the Khalkhin Gol River and occupied a significant bridgehead there. Under the cover of night, the infantry regiment of the newly arrived division was withdrawn there. In the morning, the enemy discovered the poorly camouflaged battle formations of the regiment and opened artillery fire. Young Red Army soldiers, who before, as they say, did not

had a chance to sniff gunpowder, they were confused. There was a panic in some units. The commanders tried to restore order, but this was not always possible. Fortunately for us, the Japanese were unable to take advantage of the confusion of our fighters. Apparently, it took the enemy a lot of time to organize motorized detachments. When they finally began to advance, four of our batteries opened fire on them, urgently advanced at my order to open positions. Under the cover of artillery, fresh rifle battalions were restored

position.

But the incident with the unfired fighters made a strong impression on the chairman of the Moscow commission, G.I. Kulik. He suddenly offered to give an order to withdraw our units from the bridgehead. The command of the group of troops tried to prove the inexpediency of such a decision, and then flatly refused to carry it out (the name of the commander of the 1st Army Group G.K. Zhukov at Khalkhin Gol, who was in disgrace in 1963, Voronov did not dare to name in a positive context. - **B.S.**). Moscow found out about this (more precisely, Stalin. - **B.S.**). An order came from there - not to withdraw the troops, and Kulik's commissions to immediately return to the capital. In the morning they saw off those who departed. Everyone breathed a sigh of relief: Kulik brought in a lot of confusion. The episode with Kulik's proposal to leave the bridgehead behind Khalkhin Gol

is confirmed in the memoirs by both Budyonny and Zhukov. In a conversation with the writer Konstantin Simonov, Georgy Konstantinovich said: "When at first a difficult situation arose, when the Japanese reached this bank of the river near Bain-Tsagan, Kulik demanded that artillery be removed from the other side, from the bridgehead that we had left there, artillery would disappear, they say, artillery ! I answer him: if so, let's remove everything from the bridgehead, let's remove the infantry as well. I will not leave the infantry there without artillery. Artillery is the backbone of the defense, but what - the infantry will disappear there alone? Then let's shoot everything. In general, he did not obey, refused to comply with this order and conveyed to Moscow his point of view that I consider it inappropriate to withdraw artillery from the bridgehead. And this point of view prevailed.

In this case, Zhukov was right, not Kulik. However, Grigory Ivanovich's proposals cannot be called absurd. If the Japanese had tank and motorized

parts, then the bridgehead might really have to be evacuated. Zhukov knew the enemy better than Kulik and was sure that the Japanese would not be able to build on the success achieved due to the instability of the 63rd Infantry Regiment of the 82nd Motorized Rifle Division, formed on the basis of territorial units. But Stalin did not blame Kulik for this incident. In the same 39th, Grigory Ivanovich became Deputy People's Commissar of Defense and head of the Main Artillery Directorate, into which the former Artillery Directorate of the Red Army was transformed. A year later, Kulik was awarded the title of Hero of the Soviet Union and Marshal. Admiral of the Fleet of the Soviet Union

Nikolai Gerasimovich Kuznetsov also left memories of Kulik, who met Grigory Ivanovich back in Spain, and had the first sharp conflict with him during the Finnish war: "L.Z. arrived at the headquarters of the Leningrad Military District. Mekhlis and G.I. Sandpiper. They called Admirals Haller and Isakov and began to give them very incompetent instructions. Unfounded claims against the fleet on their part escalated when the campaign on land began to drag on. G.I. Kulik brought a lot of turmoil where he was sent. I first heard about him in Spain, where he was nicknamed "the general no-no". Apart from the word "but" - "no", he knew almost nothing in Spanish and therefore used it appropriately and inappropriately. Returning to Moscow, G.I. Kulik took a high post, then became a marshal. At the beginning of the war, he was surrounded, somehow got out of it. Then he was sent as a representative of the Stavka to the South. For the fact that he signed some rash orders, he was tried and lowered in rank. But, as far as I know, this did little to reason with him.

Nikolai Gerasimovich either forgot that the former marshal was later shot, or did not mention it, so as not to destroy the impression of the unattractive portrait of Kulik drawn. The reader will certainly sympathize with the innocently murdered. But Kuznetsov himself was in the shoes of Grigory Ivanovich, twice. dy being demoted and, like Kulik, restored to the highest military rank only posthumously (but he was lucky to die in his own bed). Let us assume that the assertion that in Spain Kulik only interfered with

everyone is hardly true. Would not become a general, from whom there was no

sense, award the Order of Lenin and give under his command all the artillery of the Red Army. By

the way, when Kulik scolded the fleet, he was right. On the very eve of the Finnish war, NKVD chief L.P. Beria sent a letter to Voroshilov stating that the Baltic Fleet was completely unprepared for hostilities, and on some ships the gunners did not even know how to load guns. Lavrenty Pavlovich emphasized: "The artillery preparation of the fleet is not up to par. The cruiser "Kirov" did not perform any of the test firing from the main caliber. The new destroyers and leaders of test firing did not complete, and the old destroyers, which will carry out amphibious missions in the upcoming operation, did not undergo fire training throughout the summer campaign and were used only as support ships.

The personnel, including the commanders of combat units, are poorly aware of the new materiel of artillery. The K-34 76-mm guns and DK heavy machine guns installed on the new ships have not yet been tested. On

the Jacobin, when checking the knowledge of the material part, it turned out that the personnel could not even load the K-21 gun on their own. Some ships and coastal units do not have firing tables. Fort "Krasnoflotsky", which is entrusted with very responsible tasks, received tables of ultra-long firing for a 12-inch caliber only on November 16.

Of course, the troops of the Leningrad District were no better prepared for war than the fleet, but at least at the final stage, albeit with heavy losses, they broke through the Mannerheim line. The sailors, despite their overwhelming superiority, were not able to suppress the Finnish coastal batteries and disrupt navigation in the Gulf of Finland. So Kulik had something to scold Kuznetsov's subordinates for. Grigory Ivanovich himself was convinced all his life that he played a decisive role in the success of the Finnish campaign. He told everyone and everyone that he was the first to come up with an idea to accompany the infantry in the offensive with artillery fire. In fact, this technique was known back in the First World War, but it required good interaction between infantry and artillery and high skill of artillerymen in order not to hit their own. At the very least, but such an interaction Kulik

adjusted. During the second assault on the Mannerheim Line in February 40, the infantry was accompanied by a barrage of fire. Artillerymen also learned during artillery preparation to make several false shifts of fire into the depths of the defense, so that the enemy would think that an attack was beginning, come out of hiding into the trenches and fall under repeated destructive shelling. True, the Finns quickly found an antidote. They allowed the advancing Red Army soldiers to a distance of 100 m and only then returned to the trenches. It took 20 minutes to overcome this last literally fiery hundred meters in deep snow. This time was quite enough for the Finnish infantrymen, and the Soviet artillery could no longer hit the Finnish positions, as it would inevitably hit its own. Nevertheless, the Red Army nevertheless

broke through the Mannerheim line. The decisive role in the breakthrough was played by artillery, which in the end was able to destroy many Finnish pillboxes with direct fire. And in March of the 40th, Grigory Ivanovich Kulik was awarded the title of Hero of the Soviet Union "for the exemplary performance of the combat missions of the command on the front of the fight against the Finnish White Guard and the courage and heroism shown at the same time."

Marshal of Artillery N.D., who did not sympathize with Kulik at all. Yakovlev, who replaced Grigory Ivanovich as head of the GAU on June 21, 41, on the very eve of the war, admits that the Soviet artillery as a whole was well prepared for a collision with Germany: "It was possible not only to develop a number of completely new types of weapons, but also to accept them into mass production. The Soviet Armed Forces received a Tokarev self-loading rifle, a lightweight Maxim machine gun on a tripod, an 82-mm mortar, a 45-mm anti-tank gun, a 122-mm howitzer and a 152-mm howitzer-gun of the 1937 model, 76-mm anti-aircraft, 76-mm mountain gun, 120-mm mortar, 76-mm divisional and 152-mm guns, 37-mm and 85-mm anti-aircraft guns of the 1939 model. And all these successes, it turns out, were achieved not thanks to, but in spite of Kulik, whom Nikolai Dmitrievich, like Voronov, paints with black paint alone: "In matters of operational art and the combat use of artillery, he is, to put it mildly, rather weak. G.I. Kulik led the meeting with noticeable nervousness (one gets nervous here if the meeting takes place in the last hours before the war, when there are more and more signs that

German troops are about to invade Soviet territory, and besides, you are being removed from your post as head of the GAU! - **B.S.**), but he spoke extremely self-confidently, probably hoping that the authority of his judgments must be supported by a high official position and the rank of marshal. Yes, it was a typical case not of the power of authority, but of the authority of power. Listening to the confused

speech of G.I. Kulik, I bitterly recalled what I heard once, that he nevertheless enjoys a certain confidence in the government, and above all in I.V. Stalin, who for some reason considered G.I. Kulik as a military leader, capable even of solving operational issues. And I thought: really none of the subordinates of the former head of the GAU found the courage in himself before it had already been done, to open the eyes of the leadership to the complete incompetence of G.I. Kulik in his high position? But he immediately consoled himself: Justice is something

A there are some brave people out there!
triumphed!" By justice,

Yakovlev undoubtedly understood Kulik's removal from the post of head of the GAU (while he continued to be deputy people's commissar of defense). And who, interestingly, did he mean by "brave people"? Probably the authors of denunciations against the marshal. But I will talk about this below. In the meantime, I note that Voronov also mentions that Grigory Ivanovich believed in his outstanding operational abilities:

"Quite by chance, I became aware that the Deputy People's Commissar of Defense, the head of the GAU G.I. Kulik and Deputy Chief of the General Staff I.V. Smorodinov are developing a project to eliminate the post of chief of artillery of the Red Army and his apparatus and transfer their functions to the GAU. These unreasonable proposals did not fit in my head. The Soviet-Finnish war has just ended, which has confirmed the increased role and importance of artillery in modern warfare. Soon I was officially warned that the issue had already been resolved by higher authorities. I received a notice to come to the meeting in the Kremlin. I protested, but my only "voice" was "crying in the wilderness." After that, G.I. Kulik, in his florid speech,

asked to be taken into account that it was time for him to move to work in another direction and therefore he needed to be released from work at the GAU.

Where he was aiming - he did not say this, but explained that his movement would correspond to his high operational knowledge and work experience, that he had developed a large operational "scent". Kulik made a proposal to appoint me the head of the new GAU (which was transferred to some of the functions of the head of artillery. - **B.S.**).

I asked to withdraw my candidacy, as I did not agree with the new structure, and offered to leave G.I. Kulik: let him prove in practice the usefulness of the innovations he proposes.

G.I. was approved as the head of the GAU. Kulik, I'm his first Deputy, G.K. Savchenko - the second. V.D. Grendal is third."

Yakovlev also criticizes Kulik's idea of abolishing the post of chief of artillery: "Back in the middle of 1940, at the insistence of Deputy People's Commissar of Defense Kulik, the position of chief of artillery was liquidated and introduced into the GAU, of which Kulik was the head, the position of deputy chief of the GAU for combat training of artillery. But what a job it was! Under this deputy chief of the GAU, there was only a small department of combat TRAINING: the Chief of Artillery of the Red Army participated in coordinating all the tactical and technical requirements for artillery weapons developed by the industry on orders from the GAU, and organized

testing of prototypes of artillery weapons. Thus, the decisive word on the adoption of one or another type of gun belonged to the chief of artillery. Unless, of course, there were other opinions from the leadership of the General Staff, the People's Commissar of Defense Ravens? Not much! military or the government. What, for example, could N.N. The head of the GAU could not approve his requirements for the artillery weapons accepted for development. Everything closed on the GAU, in which he was just a deputy chief. It is characteristic that, according to Voronov, the reform undertaken was not aimed at belittling his role. After all, it was Kulik who proposed to Nikolai Nikolaevich to head the reorganized GAU. It is possible that the planned transfer

of the marshal to another position was associated with the Red Army invasion that was being prepared just in the middle of the 40th year.

Armies to Western Europe at the moment when the Wehrmacht gets bogged down in the attack on the Maginot Line. Perhaps Stalin, taking into account Kulik's experience in Finland, expected to appoint Grigory Ivanovich as commander or coordinator of the actions of one of the fronts. However, the rapid collapse of the French resistance forced the abandonment of the rush to the West. Perhaps because the Soviet-German war was postponed, Kulik remained at the head of the GAU for the time being? But when in 1941, still not knowing about the Barbarossa, Stalin decided to invade Germany and Poland in July, he was again going to send the faithful Grigory Ivanovich to the front. Yakovlev, who held the post of artillery chief of the Kyiv Special Military District, recalled that on June 16 he was announced to be appointed head of the GAU. This means that the decision to move Kulik was made a few days earlier. Probably soon after the Politburo on June 4, 1941 decided to create a Polish division within the Red Army by July 1. Similarly, in the autumn of 1939, a month before the Soviet invasion of Finland, the Finnish People's Corps appeared in the Red Army. And in the very first hours of the war, Grigory Ivanovich went to the Western Front to the 3rd and 10th armies located in the Bialystok ledge and aimed at Warsaw. It seems to me that most likely the removal of

Kulik from the leadership of the Main Artillery Directorate did not mean that Stalin did not trust him. And why was Grigory Ivanovich scolded for? After all, artillery turned out to be better prepared for war than, for example, aviation or tank troops. Not only Yakovlev wrote about this. For example, in the book of Marshal of Artillery K.P. Kazakov "Always with infantry, always with tanks", which is an outline of the actions of Soviet artillery in 1941-1945, we read that on the eve of the war, "the artillery of the Red Army was powerful in armament and quite modern in organization and combat training, a branch of the armed forces capable of successfully solving combat missions in modern warfare. And Colonel-General of Artillery N.M. Khlebnikov in his memoirs gives a comparative

description of the armament of Soviet and German artillery in the 41st: "During the years of Soviet power, our artillery made a sharp leap forward and, as far as I knew, by 1941 it overtook artillery in decisive indicators

the largest foreign armies, including the German fascist. In anti-tank artillery, we

had a 45-mm cannon with a high muzzle velocity, penetrating ability and twice as powerful a projectile as a German 37-mm cannon (penetrating ability at 500 meters through armor, respectively, 40 and 26 mm). In regimental artillery, our 76-mm gun

of the 1927 model was also almost twice as powerful as the German 75-mm gun. The divisional German artillery was armed with 75-mm guns of 1918 and 1922, which were significantly inferior to our 76-mm USV gun of 1939 in all respects (range, respectively, 4.5 and 8.5 km). The German 105-mm howitzer was one and a half times inferior in power to our 122-mm M-30 divisional howitzer. Our 152-mm M-10 howitzer, according to ballistic data, was approximately equal to the German 150-mm howitzer, but was lighter by 1.5 tons, and therefore much more mobile and maneuverable.

In corps artillery, we had an excellent "duplex" (this is how gunners call two gun barrels of different calibers that can be mounted on the same gun carriage. - B.S.), i.e. **122** -mm gun A-19 and 155-mm howitzer-cannon with a firing range of 20 and 17 kilometers, respectively. This "duplex" had no equal in any foreign army. In artillery of high and special power, our 152-mm guns BR-2 and 210-

mm BR-17 were not inferior to the German ones, and the 203-mm howitzer B-4 and the 305-mm howitzer BR-18 were superior to the German guns of the corresponding calibers. But, perhaps, the Soviet generals

and marshals, out of patriotic motives, exaggerated the merits of their own artillery? Interestingly, what are the reviews from the German side? German tank general F.V. von Mellenthin in his book Tank Battles 1939-1945. he did not spare critical arrows against the Red Army, he scolded infantry, tank formations, and aviation for poor tactical training and actions according to the template. Only he spoke very respectfully about artillery: "Despite the well-known shortcomings, Russian artillery is a very formidable branch of the armed forces and fully deserves the high appraisal that Stalin gave it. In

During the war, the Red Army used more heavy guns than the army of any other belligerent country. The

shortcomings were primarily related to the insufficient interaction of artillery with infantry and tanks, poor reconnaissance of targets and not very perfect fire control. However, all this related rather to the field of combat training, for which Voronov, and not Kulik, was mainly responsible. No, it was not because of failures in

the work of the GAU that trouble crept up to the marshal. She came from a completely different side and was connected not with the official activities of Grigory Ivanovich, but with his personal life, which it was time to talk about.

Grigory Ivanovich married for the first time in 1921. His wife was Lydia Yakovlevna Paul, the daughter of a wealthy German colonist, whose ancestors settled on the Don under Catherine II. Kulik met her in Rostov-on-Don. Later, the father-in-law of the future marshal was written into fists. In the early 1920s, Grigory Ivanovich managed, using his high position, to defend the Pauli farm from confiscation. However, when the policy of "final elimination of the kulaks as a class" began, Kulik was reminded of his "counter-revolutionary connection with the world-eater" and in December 1929 he was reprimanded along the party line. Grigory Ivanovich realized that the social and ethnic origin of his wife was becoming an insurmountable obstacle in climbing the steps of the military hierarchy, and he divorced Lydia Yakovlevna. Especially since his heart already belonged to someone else. At the resort, Kulik met Kira Ivanovna Simonich. The marshal's daughter from his first marriage, Valentina Grigorievna Kulik-Osipenko, in an interview with the writer Vladimir Karpov, recalled: "Due to the fact that Kulik's wife was German, he had trouble at work. Maybe that was one of the reasons why her dad divorced her. But the main reason was the unexpected love of his father for Kira Ivanovna. She really was very beautiful. Such a woman - no one could pass by without paying attention! Her father met her, it seems, at a resort. And in 1930, such love flared up that both left their families (at the trial in 1950, Kulik claimed that "in 1932 I married the count's daughter Simonich, with whom I lived for 10 years"; probably; live with Kira Ivanovna Grigory Ivanovich, as evidenced by

daughter, really started in the 30th year, and they remained together for 10 years - until the tragic separation in May 40th, and in the 32nd year they only formalized their relationship by legal marriage. - **B.S.**) Kira Ivanovna also had a husband and son Misha. She left everything and came to her father. I was with my mother in a sanatorium. We returned to Moscow, and in the apartment the new wife of the pope! I was only eight years old, but I realized what a tragedy happened for my mother and me. The worst thing is that we were forced to live in the same apartment. There is nowhere to go. My mother and I are in one room, my father and Kira are in another, and there is one common dining room. The situation is tense, electrified You understand - two wives in one apartment! But my mother is a typical, restrained German wife - kuhe, kirche, kinder (kitchen, church, children). She walked with pursed lips, was silent. And Kira Ivanovna - the winner, and besides happy, kept herself independent. Mom, in order to be less at home, got a job as a clerk, she had no education. I felt very sorry for her. But I'm a child, it's easier for me, many girlfriends came, they lived in our house - Gamarnik's daughter, Uborevich's daughter (the children were friends with Valya, despite the fact that their fathers treated Kulik more than cool, contemptuously calling the hero Tsaritsyn "fireworks". - **B.S.**) Later, through Voroshilov, my father secured that my mother and I were given two small rooms in a shared apartment, not far from the Baumanskaya metro station. Father and Kira Ivanovna remained in the old apartment. In 1932, they had a daughter, also named Kira. In 1938, when trouble happened to Gamarnik - he shot himself, and he was declared an enemy of the people (the trouble, as we remember, happened a year earlier - in 1937 - B.S.), - his father **added** Gamarnik's apartment to that, in which we lived before, they were adjacent, numbers 13 and 14, on the same landing. Moreover, the father left the united apartment number 14, and 13, as unlucky, removed (but Grigory Ivanovich failed to outwit fate, and he ended just as badly as Gamarnik and Tukhachevsky. - B.S.) . My mother's relationship

with my father did not end at all. He took care of us and helped us. In 1938, he got his mother a ticket to a sanatorium. And Kira Ivanovna came for me and took me to her: "Dad said you will live with us." - "And how is the school - in September the beginning of studies?" "We have a school nearby, you can go there." Well, the word of the pope is law. And when

my mother returned from the resort, they decided not to transfer me from school to school, she stayed with my father until the end of the school year. I went to my mother on the weekends, I missed her very much. One day she says to me: "Daughter, I met a good man, he proposed to me, how do you look at it?" - "Who is he?" "Colonel, we met in a sanatorium. Let's meet here in Moscow." - "Well, mommy, I'm growing up, someday I'll get married too. Why would you live alone? Agree. And I'll live with my dad." "Why not with me?" "Paternal bread will still be sweeter than stepfather's bread." Cruelly, probably, it turned out, but I wished her well, didn't want to

interfere.

And for the last three years of school, from the eighth to the tenth grade, I lived with my father and Kira Ivanovna. We developed an excellent relationship with Kira, she was a cheerful, sociable woman, in the summer the dacha was full of guests. Father was given a dacha in Kryukov, Kuibyshev used to live here, now his two wives lived in the wing - the first and second, they raised their son Volodya. Kira was not just beautiful, but very

beautiful. And she also had that very zest that makes even an ugly woman attractive. Here is such an irresistible combination in it: beauty and charm. Her eyes have some kind of greenish, not even color, but light. Some kind of demonic spark in them. Good figure, beautiful slender legs. Chilled hands. The disposition is cheerful. Clever, cunning - not a simpleton. Yes, and the will was firm, her husband-marshal held tightly in her hands! Men were attracted like a magnet: artists, writers, musicians and other celebrities constantly circled around her. She liked it. Loved to be the center of attention. What beautiful woman doesn't like that? No wonder Kulik fell under Kira's spell. In general, in the story with his two first wives, Grigory Ivanovich looks quite worthy. Although he fell out of love with Lydia Yakovlevna, he continued

to take care of her and her daughter, was not afraid that they would be accused in connection with the "kulak daughter". And when the ex-wife had a new romance, Grigory Ivanovich readily took his daughter Valya, whom Kira Ivanovna temporarily became the second mother. But the trouble is, Kira Simonich's profile was no better than Lidia Paul's. Not only is his father a count from Russified Serbs,

rose to the rank of general. So even this same Count General in 1919 brought to the expense of the Cheka. Officially - "for counter-revolutionary activities." In fact, for a "bad position": before the revolution, the poor fellow was the head of counterintelligence at the naval base in Helsingfors. Both of Kira's brothers were also arrested and sent to the camps. She herself, with her first husband, a major NEPman Efim Abramovich Shapiro, and with her mother, Maria Romanovna, a merchant's daughter, were exiled to Siberia in 1928. There, Kira gave birth to a son, Misha. In the summer of the 29th, they were all returned from exile. Maria Romanovna went to Italy to one of her daughters, who had emigrated earlier, and so she remained in Italy. Kira went to improve her health to the Black Sea, where she met with Kulik. The first husband gave her a divorce without objection and later remained on good terms with Kira. But the KGB suspected Yefim Abramovich of having links with foreign intelligence services. However, whom they only did not suspect of such connections!

No, I think not because of career considerations Kulik divorced Paul and married Simonich, but only because of love. Agree, reader, that the father-count, and even shot by the Chekists, is by the standards of that time even worse than the father-fist. But to this we must add the repressed brothers of Kira and her first husband and, oh horror, relatives abroad. In a word, the whole gentleman's set. But for the time being, this bast was not put on the line for Grigory Ivanovich.

On November 39, Kulik celebrated his birthday at the dacha. This evening was well remembered by his daughter Valya. She told Vladimir Vasilyevich Karpov: "Father's old friends were here - Voroshilov, Timoshenko, Budyonny, Gorodovikov, writer Alexei Tolstoy, tenor Kozlovsky, composer Pokrass, the first Heroes of the Soviet Union Lyapidevsky, Slepnev with his wife a ballerina and other celebrities. Just as we were about to sit down at the table, the phone rang. Dad picked up the phone and, as soon as he heard the voice of the speaker, he immediately clamped the receiver and shouted somehow in a strangled voice, addressing no one: "Be quiet, Stalin!"

Everyone instantly fell silent, tensed in anticipation. And Kulik, meanwhile, answered: "What am I doing? Yes, I'm going to celebrate my birthday. Friends have arrived."

Stalin said: "Wait for me, I'll be right there." It was so unexpected and unusual that everyone was simply dumbfounded, it turned out to be a silent scene, like in Gogol's *The Government Inspector*. And then they all started talking at once, quietly, muffled, with anxiety. The meaning of all conversations was one:

"What does this mean?" In general, while we were wondering what this meant, suddenly numerous cars and small buses rushed by. People in civilian clothes jumped out of them and instantly scattered behind bushes, trees, fences. A few minutes later no one was visible, but we knew that - everything around was

packed with guards. Soon, "himself" arrived, accompanied by bodyguards and her boss, the all-powerful Vlasik. The guards brought in a case of vintage wine. Stalin presented dad with a book by Zola "The Defeat" (as if he had a premonition of the events of the first months of the Great Patriotic War. - **B.S.**) with an inscription made right on the cover: "To my old friend. I. Stalin. Then Stalin walked around everyone, shook hands with everyone. Everyone stood along the walls and waited for him to come. I was struck by the fact that he was small and not as majestic as in the portraits and in our imagination. He has bad pale skin of the face with occasional pits from the smallpox

disease. We sat at the table. They made toasts to the health of their father, to the Stalin drank only the wine that the guards brought and poured for him.

After a while, the hops relieved tension, they began to speak loudly, joked. Kozlovsky sang songs to the accompaniment of Pokrass. I did not notice that Stalin showed any special signs of attention to Kira Ivanovna. Yes, and she behaved, as usual, at ease, cheerfully joking with men. Father sat next to Stalin, but was afraid to offer him any snacks or drinks, knowing Stalin's suspiciousness. Iosif Vissarionovich spent a few minutes with me. When everyone began to dance, and I stood aside, he said: "Well, why don't you invite such a young beautiful girl, invite her, she misses you!" Here the story of Valentina Grigorievna was interrupted by her pilot

husband Alexander Stepanovich Osipenko: "Stalin remembered her in general. He almost deprived me of my bride, he advised his son Vasily everything - do not miss, look what a beautiful daughter Kulik has! .. "

Vladimir Vasilievich, based on the vague rumors that circulated among the writers, believed that Stalin was inflamed with passion for Kira Ivanovna, and when she rejected the leader's harassment, a tragic denouement followed. Therefore, Karpov tried to find out the smallest details of Stalin's unexpected visit to Kulik's dacha. The writer managed to talk on this topic with Ivan Semenovitch Kozlovsky. And this is what the great tenor said about that memorable evening: "It was damp weather, and by night it froze and ice formed. Cars skidded up. Kulik's dacha was on a hillock. The car in which Stalin was traveling skidded on a slippery slope, and she fell into a ditch. Imagine how scared he is! He probably thought it was an attempt on his life. He was generally very cautious and suspicious. He himself did not say anything about this case. We heard from the head of his bodyguards. Well, they sat down at the table, congratulated the owner, drank, ate, drank some more. Stalin made a very strange toast. We didn't even understand why he said it: "Let's drink to democratic Finland." Everyone drank. And on November 30, just a few

days after our feast, Soviet troops began military operations against Finland. And then I realized: even at a party, Stalin's head was occupied with the impending war, which he decided to start in order to make Finland "democratic." I sat at the piano in the dining room next door and sang joking songs to Stalin, something

like "Oh, cutie, take off your shirt." We were all pretty drunk by then, and I could afford such jokes. Suddenly, Kira Ivanovna entered this room and straight to Stalin, and begins to talk to him as if they were old acquaintances. They even moved away from the piano. Out of the corner of my ear, I heard Kira talking about her brother Sergei, a former officer in the White Army. At that time he was somewhere in the camps. Kira very persistently asked Stalin to help save her brother. I realized that I was superfluous during this conversation, and slowly left the room, leaving them alone.

Karpov believes that the testimonies of Kozlovsky and Kulik's daughter prove that there was some kind of special relationship between Stalin and Kira. Kozlovsky suggested that the subsequent disappearance of the marshal's wife may be due to the fact that "the director of the Bolshoi Theater Mordvinov said something about her.

He was imprisoned shortly before that, and he never returned from there. And he looked after Kira Ivanovna, they were close friends - shortly before the arrest they were swimming somewhere in the lake or in the pond, they were seen there. Vladimir Vasilievich immediately built a simple scheme: Beria reported to Stalin about the intimate relationship between director Boris Arkadyevich Mordvinov and Kulik's wife, after which "it could happen that the jealousy of the dictator jumped to the point that he did not stop before punishing both. And this cruel man had only one punishment - death. Here, however, there is one inconsistency. Stalin punished

both of them in very different ways. Mordvinov was arrested, albeit without much publicity, but in such a way that both relatives and fellow artists, the same Kozlovsky, knew about it. And he lived in the camp for thirteen years - until 1953. Simonich simply disappeared, so much so that for several decades no one knew about her fate.

Valentina Grigorievna told Karpov about the last reception in the Kremlin, which she had to attend: "The last reception in the Kremlin, which Kira Ivanovna attended, took place on May 5, 1940, it seems, in honor of Press Day. Stalin did not forget me after visiting our dacha on my father's birthday. And I was invited. It was the first (and last. - **B.S.**) Kremlin reception that I had the opportunity to attend. Everything there was great. Huge sterlets on dishes. Vintage wines, cognacs, vodkas. Snacks prepared by skilled chefs. Lots of light. The hall is full of people, one more famous than the other! I was in seventh heaven. Stalin did not show any attention to me or to Kira Ivanovna, he did not even come up. He sat in his usual place, surrounded by members of the Politburo. He glanced once or twice in our direction, well, maybe he lingered for a second, no longer. Or maybe it seemed to me, and he looked the same way as he did at everyone. Don't know. I can't say. Only this was the last reception in the life of Kira Ivanovna. She disappeared two days later." Kulik himself, at the trial in August 1950, said the following about the disappearance of his wife: "Once Stalin called me and said that

there are reports that my wife is related to Italians, and offered to break up with her. After that, Simonich and I were at the May Day parade, and on May 5 (1940. - **B.S.**) at 11 o'clock in the afternoon she

disappeared. I assumed that she was arrested, but when I went to Beria, he told me that no. After that, I immediately informed

the Central Committee.” Obviously, Valentina Grigorievna Kulik-Osipenko, over the years, the date of the reception at the Kremlin, mistakenly named the date of the disappearance of Kira Ivanovna. Interestingly, Grigory Ivanovich immediately guessed that there had been a so-called "secret arrest" used by the NKVD and the NKGB in relation to persons whose detention the authorities preferred not to make public, so as not to frighten possible accomplices or compromise ahead of time those associated with the arrested persons, occupying a prominent public position. What really happened to Kira Ivanovna Simonich became known only in 1953 during the investigation and trial of the fabricated case “on the conspiracy of Beria” (I will talk about this case in detail in an essay dedicated to Lavrenty Pavlovich). In the summer of 53, one of Beria's subordinates, former Prince O.Sh. Tsereteli, who was part of a special group assigned to perform the most delicate tasks under the People's Commissar of Internal Affairs, told the investigators: “Together with Vlodzimirsky and Gulst, I participated in the secret seizure of the wife of Marshal of the Soviet Union Kulik. This was done at the direction of Beria. Why this woman was seized and what happened to her later - I do not know (during subsequent interrogations, Tsereteli miraculously remembered what exactly happened to Kira Simonich. - **B.S.**). In the summer or early autumn of 1940, Beria called me and announced that I was part of a group of four people who were instructed to secretly arrest the wife of Marshal Kulik. According to the planned plan, the detention of citizen Kulik was to take place on the

street, without publicity. For this, two passenger cars were allocated, the whole group was on duty in them. The ambush was arranged not far from the house where the apartment of Marshal Kulik was located. On the second or third day, when citizen Kulik left the house alone and walked along a deserted lane, she was detained by us and taken to the courtyard of the building of the NKVD of the USSR. This whole operation was led by Merkulov, he came and checked the ambush.

In turn, the former deputy head of the 1st department for the protection of the NKVD, Veniamin Naumovich Gulst, who, unlike Tsereteli, was lucky enough to pass as a witness, and not the accused, on

interrogation testified: "In 1940, Beria called me to him. When I came to him, he asked me a question: do I know Kulik's wife? To my affirmative answer, Beria declared: "I'll take out the guts, tear off the skin, cut off my tongue, if you tell someone what you hear about!" Then Beria said: "We need to steal Kulik's wife, I give Tsereteli and Vlodzimirsky to help, but I need to steal it so that she is alone."

In the area of Vorovskogo Street for two weeks we kept an ambush, but Kulik's wife did not come out alone. Every night, Merkulov came to check on the post, he hurried us on and scolded why we were delaying. But one day she went out alone, we took her out of town to some mansion. I heard that Kulik announced a search for his wife, but to find her

could not..."

Four trained security officers easily coped with a defenseless woman who did not expect arrest at all. But then, in May 1940, they did not at all think that thirteen years later they would have to answer for the kidnapping and murder of "Marshal Kulik's wife." On August 26, 1953, the newly appointed Prosecutor General of the USSR Roman Andreyevich Rudenko

interrogated Beria about the circumstances of the kidnapping of Kulik's wife. Do you know Shalva Otarovich Tsereteli? - insinuatingly

the prosecutor inquired.

"I have known Tsereteli since about the end of 1922 through joint work in Georgia," Lavrenty Pavlovich answered cautiously, not yet knowing where to expect a dirty trick. - I know him on the positive side, as a brave man (great courage is needed, of course, to kidnap a defenseless woman. - **B.S.**). It was used to combat banditry. Rudenko decided to take the bull by the horns: - For what purpose did you intend to attract Tsereteli in 1941, shortly before the Great Patriotic

War? Beria realized that the investigation

knew, if not everything, then a lot, and began to tell: I don't remember, in 1940 or 1941 Tsereteli was scheduled by me to work in a special group to carry

out special tasks, i.e., beating, secretly removing persons suspicious through their connections and activities.

So, for example, it was meant to apply such a measure as

the destruction of Litvinov, Kapitsa. With regard to the director Kapler, it was planned to beat him hard.

Lavrenty Pavlovich hoped to limit himself to cases where there was no "mokruha". To kill the former People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs M.M. Litvinov and Academician P.L. Kapitsa Stalin changed his mind, and screenwriter A. Kapler, who had the misfortune of falling in love with the leader's daughter Svetlana Alliluyeva, was only severely beaten and sent to the camp. But Rudenko was interested in more serious cases with a tragic outcome. And he asked directly: "The secret kidnapping and murder of Kulik-Simonich was carried out on your personal instructions?"

"So," Beria replied in a low voice, realizing that he could not avoid bullets from his former comrades-in-arms in the Politburo. "I can't remember to whom I gave the order for the secret seizure and destruction of Kulik-Simonich, but I remember that she was interrogated. Whether there was a decision of the Special Conference on her case, I do not remember. I also do not remember whether Kulik contacted me with a statement that his wife had disappeared. I don't remember if an all-Union search for Kulik-Simonich was announced.

At the trial, which took place from December 18 to 23, 1953, Beria, or a person similar to Beria (after reading the final essay of the book, readers will understand why I say this), gave much more detailed evidence in the case of Kira Simonich and, oh miracle, I remembered the names of the performers: "I received a small report about Kulik. Rather, I asked to be given a summary of her. Having received the report, he showed it. I was ordered to seize Kulik Simonich and so that no one knew about it. Having received such instructions, I called Merkulov and Vlodzimirsky and instructed me to carry out the operation. Also in the answer of the former head of the investigative unit for especially important cases, Lev Emelyanovich Vlodzimirsky, to the question of the chairman of the Special Judicial Presence, Marshal I.S. Konev, whether he took part in the torture, kidnapping and murder of Soviet people, we find new details of the story of the disappearance of Simonich: "In 1939, in June or July, I was summoned to Beria's office. There was Merkulov and someone else. Beria instructed Merkulov to create a task force of 3-4 people under the leadership of Gulst and secretly arrest Kulik's wife. I

was a member of this group. Merkulov developed a plan on how to set up an ambush, and suggested that Kulik's wife film it in secret. There was no warrant for the arrest of

Kulik's wife." Here Ivan Stepanovich allowed himself a rhetorical maxim: "So you secretly kidnapped a person who was not guilty of anything, that is, without any reason?"

"Whether she was guilty or not, I don't know," Lev Emelyanovich honestly admitted. - I thought that they were filming her discreetly, because they did not want to compromise her husband.

- You kidnapped Kulik's wife, and what did you do with her? Konev asked, although he himself already knew perfectly well how they had dealt with the unfortunate Kira Ivanovna. "We brought her to

the NKGB building and handed her over. I didn't do anything else. A month and a half later, Kobulov called me, ordered me to go to the Sukhanov prison, get Kulik's wife there and hand her over to Blokhin. I understood that if Kulik's wife is handed over to commandant Blokhin (the same one who shot Tukhachevsky, Yakir and their comrades. - **B.S.**), then it means for the execution of the sentence, that is, execution. I only now found out that she was interrogated by Beria and Merkulov. The finishing touches were completed by the

former People's Commissar of State Security V.N. Merkulov, who stated at the trial: "Having received Beria's instructions, I got acquainted with the materials on Simonich-Kulik, but the materials were insignificant. I reported this to Beria. He was agitated, in a great hurry, and told me that Simonich-Kulik should be removed as quickly as possible. At the direction of Beria, I developed the Simonich-Kulik arrest parade ground, set up an ambush, and I went to check on the progress of the operation. I interrogated Kulik-Simonich together with Beria, or rather, Beria interrogated her, and I kept a record of the protocol. She did not give us any evidence about her espionage work and was recruited by us as an agent."

To the direct question of a member of the Special Presence, Mikhailov: "Why was Kulik-Simonia killed?" - Vsevolod Nikolaevich shouted out in fright: "I did not kill her. Beria told me that there was an order from above about her execution. I had no doubt that such an instruction had indeed been received."

On September 26, 1953, Merkulov's deputy, Bogdan Zakharovich Kobulov, told the investigation how the decision to kidnap and murder Kira Ivanovna was made: "About 1939, Beria, referring to the available indication of the "instance", ordered a secret arrest of citizen Simonich-Kulik and keep her in custody in the suburban Sukhanovskaya prison. About a month or a month and a half after the secret arrest of the marshal's wife, Beria called me and said that there was an instruction from the "instance" to liquidate Simonich Kulik. But this must be done in such a way that, except for Vlodzimirsky, no one knows about it. Beria immediately called Vlodzimirsky and instructed him how to do this: "You will go with Mironov to Sukhanovka and take a woman there who must be brought here, to the inner prison, and liquidated here. So that she does not scream during transportation and that none of the guards hear her scream, tell her that you are taking her to be released. And in general, it's better if no one sees her face, wrap a scarf around her head. Immediately, Beria called the head of the Sukhanovskaya prison that he would come for the "same"

arrested Vlod-Zimirsky, and you give her to him. While waiting for the execution of his order to execute Simonich-Kulik, Beria was very nervous, believing that the case was being dragged out, and instructed me to check the reason for the delay. However, when I arrived, Vlodzimirsky and Blokhin reported to me that the task

done".

During the investigation, Vlodzimirsky recalled how Simonich, together with Mironov, brought Simonich to the NKVD building in Varsanofevsky Lane (the famous laboratory of poisons that were tested on prisoners was also located here): "Commandant Blokhin met us there in the courtyard, who, together with Mironov, took her to the inner the ground floor of the building. I went with them to the first room and stayed there, while Blokhin and Mironov led citizen Kulik to another room, where she was shot. A few minutes later we went out into the yard with Mironov and Blokhin. Prosecutor Bochkov and Deputy People's Commissar of Internal Affairs of the USSR Kobulov approached us. I remember well how Blokhin reported to them in my presence that the sentence had been carried out. Bochkov then scolded Blokhin, making him a stern remark that he carried out the sentence, not

waiting for him and Kobulov. Unlike Blokhin and Mironov, Lev Emelyanovich did not have to kill people himself. He could not watch a man being shot point-blank in the back of the head. So he remained to wait for the commandant to return to report that the "object" had been eliminated. Prosecutor Bochkov saw the only violation of socialist legality in the fact that an innocent person was shot without waiting for him, the prosecutor, to arrive. Together with Vlodzimirsky,

Tsereteli accompanied Kira Ivanovna to the place of execution. In order to prevent the slightest leak of information, Beria involved in the liquidation of Simonich only those people who had previously participated in her abduction. During interrogation, Shalva Otarovich testified: "A month or a month and a half after the detention of citizen Kulik, I was instructed to go to the Sukhanov prison with the head of the internal prison, Mironov, to take one arrested person (the last name was not called), who they would give us there. Bring her to the building of the NKVD and hand over to the commandant Blokhin. When we arrived at the Sukhanovskaya prison, they gave us an arrested woman, in whom I identified Kulik's wife.

Mironov and I took Citizen Kulik to the building of the NKVD in Varsanofevsky Lane. We were met there by commandant Blokhin, who, together with Mironov, took her to the interior of the lower floor of the building. where they shot her." The former

commandant of the NKVD Vasily Mikhailovich Blokhin, who was a witness, was asked by the investigators about the last minutes of the life of Kulik's wife. He willingly said: "I don't know Simonich-Kulik by name. Never heard of such a thing. However, I can say the following. Deputy People's Commissar Kobulov called me (here Blokhin's memory failed me: in 1940 Kobulov was the head of one of the main departments of the NKVD, but not the deputy people's commissar. - **B.S.**) and said that the head of the investigation department, Vlodzimirsky, would bring me a woman who must be shot. At the same time, Kobulov forbade me to ask this woman about anything, and to shoot her immediately after delivery. On the same day, Vlodzimirsky, together with the head of the internal prison, Mironov, brought a woman to me and said that she should be shot. I followed Kobulov's instructions and shot her. Who this woman was, I do not know. Neither Kobulov nor Vlodzimirsky presented any documents on this woman, and for sure

likewise, I did not draw up any documents about the execution. As far as I remember, apart from Vlodzimirsky and Mironov, no one was present at this execution."

Thus, Kira Ivanovna Simonich-Kulik was secretly arrested and even more secretly shot, taking care that not a single paper with her last name remained in the archives of the NKVD, except for the fake case, conducted as a diversion, about the all-Union search for the missing marshal's wife. Grigory Ivanovich himself in the 50th was taken out for consumption with much less precautions. What terrible secret was connected with the marshal's wife?

And the dossier on Kira Ivanovna at Lubyanka existed, but after her death it was destroyed. The former head of Beria's secretariat, Stepan Solomonovich Momulov (he was lucky enough to avoid execution), testified during the investigation in 1953: "Kulik's wife was monitored using operational equipment (i.e., listening devices. - B.S.) . She met with director Mordvinov, who was later arrested. Kulik's wife disappeared without a trace. Efforts were made to search for her, but to no avail. Kulik suspected the NKVD authorities of some interest in the disappearance of his wife (it is unlikely that Grigory Ivanovich was so naive as not to understand: without Stalin's permission, the organs would not have touched Kira Ivanovna with a finger. - B.S.) and expressed these **suspicions** . There were memos to the Central Committee of the party addressed to Stalin about the disappearance of Kulik's wife and the measures taken to search for her. Beria signed these notes.

To the question: "Was there any information in the materials about the connections of Kulik, his disappeared wife and Mordvinov with abroad?" - Stepan Solomonovich answered honestly: "No, there was no such data in the materials. The conversation was only about everyday issues of their lives. Kobulov also confirmed: "There was no specific information

about her espionage work." According to the terms of the game adopted by both sides, Stalin's name was not mentioned either during the investigation or at the trial. Instead, euphemisms appeared: "instructions from above" and "instance". It is clear that no one except Stalin could give orders to Merkulov and Beria. And only by order of Joseph Vissarionovich could they kidnap and then shoot Kulik's wife. Why did Stalin need

kill the wife of an "old friend"? Vladimir Vasilyevich Karpov is convinced that since the charms of Kira Simonich were irresistible, the leader, who met with her at Kremlin receptions and banquets, could not help but fall under them. And there - either jealousy or the anger of a rejected gentleman. Frankly, this version does not seem convincing to me. Why, in this case, not choose imprisonment in a camp as a punishment for the shrew, so that she sits and thinks better? Why is it absolutely necessary to act according to the well-known principle: "So don't get it for anyone!"? Moreover, the wife in the camp is an effective way to keep Kulik's "friend" on the hook. After all, it was for this purpose that Stalin sent the wives of his comrades-in-arms in the Politburo, Kalinin and Molotov, to the camp. But in relation to Kira, Joseph Vissarionovich for some reason preferred a secret arrest and an equally secret murder, not even formalized by a death sentence of the Special Meeting. So, at least at that moment, he was not going to compromise Kulik. On the contrary, three days after the mysterious disappearance of Kira Simonich, a decree appeared in the newspapers conferring the title of Marshal of the Soviet Union to Grigory Ivanovich Kulik. Consequently, at that moment, the "old friend" was still in favor and trusted by Stalin. But why, then, did the almighty dictator need the life of a young and beautiful woman? Maybe Kira Ivanovna was actually a foreign spy? Some facts seem to indicate that Stalin and Beria could have had such suspicions. With the outbreak of

the Finnish war, Kira Ivanovna began to fuss about allowing her sister's husband, the artist Khrapkovsky, to go to the front. There he wanted to make battle sketches. However, the head of GlavPur, L.Z., categorically objected to the assignment of Khrapkovsky to the active army. Mehlis. Perhaps, Lev Zakharovich doubted that the artist's drawings would be ideologically consistent and would properly glorify the feat of the Red Army soldiers storming the Mannerheim line. And perhaps he had other reasons not to trust Khrapkovsky. But Kulik was a stubborn man and believed that friendship with Stalin would be a reliable defense for him. Through the head of Mekhlis, he ordered the Moscow City Military Commissariat to send the artist to the front. And suddenly - a bolt from the blue! Khrapkovsky is exposed as a spy. Employees

The city military registration and enlistment office immediately flew from their posts, and in April 1940 Kulik was summoned to an educational conversation by Stalin and demanded an immediate divorce from Simonich. Grigory Ivanovich refused to leave the woman he loved, and even doubted Khrapkovsky's guilt. Then there was the May Day parade and the disappearance of Kira. Was she really a seasoned Italian spy? Oh, hardly. If Merkulov himself, in 1953, stated at the trial that there were very few materials in the dossier of Kulik's wife, then there is no doubt that the Chekists could not blame Kira Ivanovna for anything other than the presence of relatives in Italy. After all, the same Vsevolod Nikolaevich would be very interested in convincing the Special Judicial Presence that Kulik-Simonich was a real spy. This could somehow justify her kidnapping and murder. But Merkulov, as we remember, could not provide any facts on this score. So why was Kira

Simonich kidnapped? It seems to me that the answer lies in the phrase dropped by the husband of Valentina Grigorievna Kulik-Osipenko in a conversation with Karpov: "Stalin advised his son Vasily everything, look how beautiful Kulik's daughter is! .." Iosif Vissarionovich actually had an idea to marry his son to a reveler on some marshal's daughter: he hoped that the marshal-in-law would guide Vasily Iosifovich on the right path. Still, sometimes Stalin was amazingly naive! Would there really be a marshal in the Red Army who would risk commanding the son of an all-powerful dictator! Air Chief Marshal A.A. Novikov once tried to delay the introduction of Vasily Stalin to the next rank and soon found himself in the Lubyanka. When, after the war, the Stalinist plan came true and Vasily married Ekaterina, the daughter of Marshal Timoshenko, this did not affect the frequency and duration of his spree. It is quite possible that before the war, Joseph Vissarionovich thought of marrying his youngest son to Valentina. Kulik, but Kira Ivanovna opposed this, and Kulik, knowing the nature of a potential son-in-law, was not enthusiastic about such a prospect. He loved his daughter and did not seem to be going to arrange his own career with the help of a dynastic marriage. As a result, Vasily still married for love in 1940 to Galina Burdonskaya, whose parents, it seems, had nothing to do with the army. And in August of the same year, 18-year-old Valya Kulik married the Hero of the Soviet Union brigade commander Osipenko.

Grigory Ivanovich was at first against this marriage. Not because he did not consider Alexander Stepanovich a worthy groom, but because he considered his daughter too young for marriage. But when Valya secretly fled to her beloved in Chisinau, Kulik resigned himself and blessed the newlyweds: "Well, what can you do! Live, be happy!"

I do not rule out that the kidnapping of Simonich was the last attempt to persuade Kulik's intractable wife to agree to the marriage of her adopted daughter with the leader's son. The protocols of interrogations of Kira Ivanovna were destroyed. Merkulov's phrase that he and Beria recruited the marshal's wife as a secret agent is also mysterious. According to the existing order, the security officers did not have the right to recruit seksots among representatives of the highest party and government nomenklatura and members of their families. Marshal Kulik certainly belonged to this kind of nomenklatura. Maybe Merkulov and Beria knocked out of the unfortunate woman the consent to divorce Kulik? This is more like the truth. But Stalin probably decided that if Kira Ivanovna was released, even if she signed a non-disclosure agreement, the case would still not be able to be concealed. And Kulik's wife was shot without a sentence. I

would like to draw the reader's attention to one more detail. If Beria and his people in the 53rd, feeling the breath of imminent death, did not get confused in the chronology, then it turns out that in the summer of the 39th, even before the visit to the birthday of Grigory Ivanovich, Stalin planned the abduction of his wife. Consequently, the story of the artist Khrapkovsky could not be the reason for the "seizure" of Simonych.

Officially, the connection with Simonich was imputed to Kulik only ten years after her abduction. In the indictment, drawn up on August 2, 1950, among other sins of Grigory Ivanovich, it was noted: "For many years, Kulik maintained close contact with hostile elements from among the relatives of his wives and, abusing his official position, provided them with all possible assistance. Having married in 1930 Simonich K.I., who was an agent of foreign intelligence, Kulik informed her about the compromising materials available against her in the relevant authorities, and also patronized Simonich's relatives, who were repressed under the Soviet regime.

The all-Union search for Kira Ivanovna Simonich, announced on May 9, 1940, was terminated only on January 8, 1952. But Marshal Kulik quickly guessed in whose hands his second wife ended up, and hardly doubted her death. And very quickly found a third wife. Here is what Valentina Grigoryevna told the writer Vladimir Karpov about her father's third marriage: "Several months passed, there were no hopes that Kira Ivanovna would be found, as if she had sunk into the water. My father was constantly at work, in the People's Commissariat, at exercises, at the training ground, then many new types of weapons were tested, and he was just like the deputy people's commissar and dealt with issues of arming the Red Army. He is constantly in the circle of his colleagues, he came home late, and often went on a business trip for many days. In general, he did not have such opportunities to meet, or rather, not even meet, but choose a new wife for himself. And that's probably why, there was a very amazing, one might say, sensational accident. I studied at school, and

friends from those who studied with me in the same class came to me. We prepared lessons, chatted, turned on the gramophone. Father, meeting my girlfriends, did not pay attention to them: so, he would glance briefly, joke about our musical hobbies or chatter, and leave either to relax or do his own thing. But one day, among other friends, Olya Mikhailovskaya came to me, she did not visit me often, and after this visit she also did not appear for several days. But apparently, her father remembered something about her. Yes, not something, but she was a very beautiful, well-built girl. After that, my father once said to me: "Well, why are you bringing such ugly girlfriends? Here is one beautiful one you have, Olenka, and you do not invite that one. Please invite her." I didn't specifically invite, I didn't see anything special in this, and the next time Olya came as usual - that's how the situation developed, and she went in. This time dad, when he came home, talked to her more carefully. And then I began to notice that they had some kind of special relationship. Apparently, he took her phone number, and they were already talking, and maybe even met somewhere other than us. The case ended with a sensational surprise: dad married my friend Olga Yakovlevna Mikhailovskaya! Their age difference was thirty-two years, but this did not puzzle either my father or Olya. It is clear that

It was impossible for me to stay in this house. If my mother and I reconciled ourselves and were forced to live together with Kira Ivanovna until we received separate housing, then it was simply impossible to live together with my girlfriend. All this shocked me very much, because Olya had been in our house for a long time, even under Kira Ivanovna, she was my age, a girl. And suddenly she became my stepmother! This was one of the reasons why I so quickly, also in the tenth grade, decided to marry Alexander Stepanovich, my falcon.

The wedding of Grigory Ivanovich and Olya was played in October 40th. They walked in grand style: wine from Moldova and the Caucasus, royal varieties of Siberian and Far Eastern fish, fruits from Central Asia. Stalin himself was at the wedding. He wished his dear friend Grigory Ivanovich and his young wife a long and happy life, shouted "Bitter!" It seemed to all the guests that Iosif Vissarionovich favored the marshal. But wasn't this unexpected visit to Kulikovo's wedding a phenomenon in a diabolical play written and staged by Stalin, the finale of which was to be the death of the groom? After all, Iosif Vissarionovich played the same way with Mikhail Efimovich Koltsov, just before his arrest, he awarded the editor of Ogonyok with the Order of Lenin and sanctioned his election to the Academy of Sciences. Maybe the title of Marshal, and the Gold Star of the Hero, and the emphasized attention to Kulik at the wedding should only set off a further fall, which was already a foregone conclusion, in the 40th? Personally, this version seems fantastic to me, suitable only for a historical thriller. Stalin would not have made a person whom he did not trust as deputy people's commissar of defense and head of the Main Artillery Directorate, responsible for arming the Red Army. Kulik is not Mikhail Koltsov, it is easier and safer to replace the editor of even a very popular magazine than one of the leaders of the Red Army. Although, of course, Iosif Vissarionovich was deeply convinced that there are no irreplaceable people, whether it be an editor or a marshal. On Kulik, compromising evidence began to be actively collected on the very eve and in the first days of the Great Patriotic War.

As part of the 41st "Aviator Case", which began to unwind in May, the People's Commissar for Armaments of the BL was arrested. Vannikov. Under pressure from the NKVD investigators, who threatened to beat him up properly, Boris Lvovich admitted that he was a member of a conspiratorial organization,

of which Kulik was named a member. A few days before the German attack on the Soviet Union, Kulik's deputy for political affairs, G.K., was arrested. Savchenko. On June 28, 1941, Georgy Kosmich, apparently at the dictation of the NKGB investigator Golenishchev, testified: "Kulik said that it was necessary to create external hype in the work of the Artillery Directorate, show imaginary successes, but in fact take possible measures to weaken the country's defense capability.

The only real force, said Kulik, which can help us change the existing situation in the country, is the war with Germany. This war is inevitable, and we must prepare for it in such a way as to ensure the defeat of the Red Army in the very first battles. Agreeing **with** Kulik, I told him about my past conspiratorial relationship with Gitis. As a result, we agreed to jointly carry out wrecking work in the system of the Artillery Directorate. Stalin urgently searched for candidates responsible for the crushing defeats of the Red Army in the very first battles with the Germans. Savchenko's interrogation protocols reflected not only fantastic confessions about their wrecking work with Kulik, but also real conversations that the head of the Artillery Department had with his deputy. "Tell me,

Georgy Kosmich, how long will I be telling everyone at the top that I am not a saboteur, not a pest, that I simply have no one to work with?" Kulik complained. "This is not work, but one hassle," Savchenko agreed. "Isn't it clear that you can't make holes in your own suit with one hand, and darn with the other so that it's imperceptible." "It seems to me that we are going somewhere in the wrong direction," Grigory Ivanovich continued to share his seditious thoughts. "Too many people

have been sent to prison. There will be no one to fight with if necessary. Something is wrong with the Soviet government. Not for that we

fought."

"- What to do?" asked the stunned Georgy Kosmich. "The situation is difficult. With a protest, you won't get out painfully," Kulik answered gloomily. - "Von Tukhachevsky and Uborevich got out. Where are they now?"

And Savchenko and Kulik, having taken another "Spaniard" as an ally - Dmitry Grigoryevich Pavlov, recently appointed head of the Auto-Armored Directorate, decided on a rash step, which they later had to bitterly regret. In 1938 they wrote a letter to Stalin asking them to stop the repressions in the "army. The widow of Pavlova Alexandra Fedorovna in a letter addressed to N.S. On April 20, 1956, Khrushcheva, where she asked to rehabilitate her husband, spoke about the ill-fated letter: "I believe that Pavlov was accused and destroyed (I remind you that Dmitry Grigorievich was shot in July 41, accusing him of the defeat of the Western Front. - **B.S.** .) was someone interested. Perhaps Beria, and here's why: Pavlov D.G. opposed the arrests of 1937–1938.

In the summer of 1938, D.G. Pavlov, Pavel Sergeevich Alliluev (commissar of the Armored Directorate) and G.I. Kulik. (Head of the Art. Department) personally submitted a petition to Comrade Stalin with a request to stop the mass arrests of old cadre commanders. Of these three people, I don't know if G.I. Kulik is alive, and as for Alliluyev, he died suddenly in the same year, on the day after his arrival from the resort. But K.E. is probably aware of the fact that the petition was personally submitted to Stalin. Voroshilov. I assume this is because before going to Comrade. Stalin, Alliluyev and Pavlov went to the dacha to K.E. Voroshilov (summer 1938).

Here Alexandra Fyodorovna made a mistake on only two points. Together with Kulik and Pavlov, a letter with a request to stop the repressions in the Red Army was signed not only by the commissar of the Armored Directorate P.S. Alliluyev, but also the commissar of the Artillery Directorate G.K. Savchenko. This error is quite understandable. Savchenko Alexandra Fedorovna could not have known at all. And the widow of Dmitry Grigorievich probably sinned against Beria in vain. Lavrenty Pavlovich headed the NKVD only in November 1938, a few months after the letter from Kulik, Pavlov and Savchenko. In addition, Beria was just called upon to reduce the scope of repression, which reached its climax under Yezhov. The new people's commissar released some of those who had been arrested by his predecessor. The petition of the four seemed to fit into the framework of the fight against the "excesses of Yezhovism" and in itself could not be blamed on the military who signed

leaders. To the arrest and execution of Pavlov in 1941, Beria did not
had a relationship.

Dmitry Grigoryevich himself, at a fleeting investigation in July 1941, testified: "In 1938, at a meeting of the Main Military Council, in the presence of members of the Politburo, I supported the speech of the Commissar of the Artillery Directorate Savchenko about the collapse of discipline in the army due to arrests of command personnel. After that, Savchenko and I were asked to write a written document on this matter. Kulik was the main author of the document. We discussed the content of the document in a group of leaders (of an imaginary anti-Soviet conspiracy. - **B.S.**) in the person of me, Kulik, Savchenko and Meretskoy.

Kulik got down to business, he invited me, Alliluyev and Savchenko to his place and offered to write a document together. We drew up a document in the form of a letter (four of us) and sent it to Voroshilov. Voroshilov's secretariat soon reported that the people's commissar had not read our letter and ordered us to take it back. Then Kulik, on one of the days off, again gathered all four of us, and, having re-edited the letter, we sent it to the General Secretary of the Central Committee, and the second copy again to Voroshilov.

The content of the letter boiled down to the fact that the main forces of the counter-revolution in the army were eliminated, but despite this, the arrests of the command staff continue and take on such extensive proportions that decomposition can begin in the army, as the Red Army men begin to criticize the actions of the commanders and political staff, suspecting them of enemies. This circumstance, as we pointed out in conclusion, can have a detrimental effect on the combat effectiveness of the army in wartime, and we asked that appropriate measures be taken in this regard. We believed that, on the basis of our statement, the government would take an appropriate decision to reduce arrests and in this way we would be able to save the conspiratorial cadres from failure. When compiling the letter, Kulik spoke slanderously about the policy of the Soviet government, which allegedly condoned the arrests. He stated that the existing order must be changed. He spoke insultingly about Voroshilov. I shared this point of view. In a certificate compiled by the Central Committee of the CPSU in June 1964 in connection with the verification of the case of

Tukhachevsky and other military leaders who were repressed in 1937-1941, it was confirmed

the existence of the petition that Alexandra Fedorovna mentioned: "In view of the fact that the situation that had arisen could adversely affect the country's defense capability, the military workers Alliluyev, Savchenko, Kulik and Pavlov sent a letter in August 1938 addressed to Stalin and Voroshilov, in which they expressed their negative attitude to mass arrests among military personnel and pointed to the detrimental consequences that unjustified repression entails. However, no one responded to this letter. But here the authors of the note contradict themselves, since they immediately note that "later Savchenko, Pavlov and Kulik were themselves among those illegally repressed." In fact, the letter, in fact, was

inspired by Stalin in order to have a pretext for removing Yezhov. Just in August, he appointed Nikolai Ivanovich Beria as his deputy with a clear aim to replace the unjustified "steel people's commissar" with him. Another thing is that with their critical speeches at the Main Military Council, the future "signatories" themselves asked for it to write a letter that ultimately turned out to be fatal for them. Stalin did not tolerate initiatives from subordinates in matters of big politics. And then Pavlov showed that Kulik dared not only to speak disrespectfully about the old Tsaritsyn colleague Voroshilov, but also directly hinted that not only Yezhov, but also the leadership as a whole was involved in illegal arrests. He also talked about the need to change the existing order. Have you thought about a military coup? It turns out that Grigory Ivanovich was not so narrow-minded and obsequious and did not think, as Voronov claimed, that "big politics is not our business!" (With these words, the marshal allegedly commented on the data on the increased concentration of Soviet troops near the Soviet borders). Iosif Vissarionovich reacted to the letter, and how cool it is. And twice. First, he removed Yezhov,

appointed Beria, and moderated the scope of repression. And then, with a three-year delay, he expelled the authors of the letter. Cautious Meretskov did not sign the letter. Maybe that's why he was only arrested, but they didn't shoot him. Stalin's brother-in-law Alliluyev was simply lucky that he soon died and did not have time to get acquainted with the cellars of the Lubyanka. Otherwise, the same fate awaited him, as the other three "signatories".

Interestingly, shortly before his death, Alliluyev met in Sochi with Marshal Blucher, who was spending his last days at large. Pavel Sergeevich's nephew, Vladimir Stanislavovich Alliluyev, recalled his uncle: "He was a sincere person, with an open, but strict soul, if he felt injustice, he always stood up. But he did not compromise his principles either. Maybe that's why Paul's authority was very high. In his last autumn of 1938, he

rested in Sochi. On a clear October day, he stopped by V.K. Blucher, and this was a few days before the arrest of the marshal. VC. Blucher, as his wife Glafira later wrote, was dissatisfied with this visit. Like, "another one came to probe Blucher." Only many years later, Glafira continues to recall, did I learn that P.S. Alliluyev did not come at all for that, but he simply wanted to help V.K. Blucher. Whether this is so, it's hard for me to judge today - Pavel

returned to Moscow on November 1, 1938, and on the evening of November 2, in the office of my father (People's Commissar of Internal Affairs of Kazakhstan S.F. Redens. - B.S.) in our Almaty apartment the **phone** rang. My mother, Anna Sergeevna, answered the phone. She answered something and suddenly screamed terribly. Moscow reported the sudden death of her older brother, Pavel Sergeevich Alliluyev. He was only 44 years old. And he just returned from the sanatorium yesterday.

In the indictment in the case of Kulik in 1950, one of the crimes incriminated to the former marshal was precisely the appeal to the leader with a request to reduce the scope of repression: "The investigation established that in 1938 Kulik G.I. established a criminal connection with participants in the anti-Soviet military conspiracy: the former commander of the Western Front Pavlov (in fact, at that time Dmitry Grigorievich headed the Armored Directorate. - B.S.) and the former deputy head of the Main Artillery Directorate of the Red Army Savchenko, with whom he conducted enemy conversations and together with them, he took measures to keep the cadres of conspirators who still survived from arrest. Stalin did not like that Kulik, Savchenko and Pavlov dared to express their own opinions on such a political issue as the fight against "enemies of the people" and question the validity of the repressions. On one's own

thinking military leaders were always very suspicious of Joseph Vissarionovich. It was the letter of 1938 that was the true cause of the troubles that befell Kulik, Savchenko and Pavlov in 1941-1942. The war began rather unsuccessfully

for Kulik. On June 23, 1941, he arrived in the Bialystok region, where the 3rd and 10th armies were located, which made up the shock group of the Western Front. As noted in the above-cited letter to Khrushchev A.F. Pavlova, her husband "The Supreme Command did not allow to go to the front line, but they sent Marshal Kulik G.I., who was surrounded." Perhaps Stalin hoped that, having quickly repelled German attacks, the main forces of the front would go on the offensive to the Vistula, and he hoped to put the marshal either at the head of the main grouping located in the Bialystok ledge, or even replace Pavlov with him as commander of the Western Front. But by the end of the second day of the war, when the counterattacks of the Soviet mechanized corps failed, the Red Army had to forget about the offensive for a long time.

Kulik was surrounded and for two weeks, together with the guards and a group of fighters and commanders of the 10th Army who joined him, went out to his own. So that the enemy did not find out about the presence of a marshal and deputy people's commissar of defense among those surrounded, Grigory Ivanovich had to change his marshal's uniform to peasant clothes. Kulik was not punished for being surrounded. Although at the first trial in February 1942, Chairman of the Special Presence of the Military Collegium of the Supreme Court V.V. Ulrich sarcastically asked Grigory Ivanovich: "So you didn't have any criminal connection with the German command?"

"Categorically not," Kulik confirmed. "There was only one thing - intelligence had evidence that the Germans were looking for me, because they believed that I remained surrounded and began to command a partisan detachment. I also remember that in one village someone from the local intelligentsia recognized me, probably a village teacher. He asked me: "Are you Kulik?" I answered: "No!" After that, we immediately fled the village. "- In

what exactly village, area was it?" Vasily Vasilyevich inquired.

"Somewhere in Belarus," the marshal answered vaguely. - "I do not know for sure". "Have you met any German

soldiers?" - affectionately
the military jurist asked.

"In one place we ran into German tanks," Kulik admitted. - "Immediately back and fled. I didn't meet with a single German soldier, I didn't talk to any of the Germans."

"How long were you surrounded?" Ulrich stated. "Twelve days." "Were you dressed up?" "Yes, I changed into peasant clothes," Grigory Ivanovich did not hide. "- Did you have a party card, other documents, orders with you?" Ulrich continued the

interrogation, hoping that it would be possible to convict the defendant of the destruction of the party card and the loss of orders. But here Vasily Vasilyevich was disappointed.

"No, I didn't have any documents with me," Kulik said honestly. "I also flew out of Moscow without documents. Getting out was difficult. Dear, I rubbed my feet so much that I could not walk. I even wanted to shoot myself." If Grigory Ivanovich had done so in desperation, he would not have had to accept the double humiliation of an unjust trial and a shameful death in the Lubyanka basement. In a letter to Stalin, written shortly after the first trial, in February 1942, Kulik also touched upon the topic of his being surrounded: "I know

that when I was surrounded, rumors spread that I had surrendered to the Germans, and, finally, I they say even now that I am in connection with the Germans. I beg you, comrade. Stalin, appoint a special commission of the Central Committee of the CPSU and investigate all the accusations against me. If I am a wrecker and do some kind of underground work, then I must be shot immediately. If not, then severely punish the slanderers, reveal who they are and what they want. Let them know that no persecution will affect me, I was, am and will die a Bolshevik. Iosif Vissarionovich decided to shoot his former friend only eight years later and did not leave him the opportunity to die a Bolshevik. Even before his arrest, Kulik was expelled from the party. But, having just got out of the "Bialystok cauldron", Grigory Ivanovich did not foresee that soon fate would make a new tragic

turn.

Marshal was sent to command the 54th Army near Leningrad, with the task of breaking the blockade of the city. This army was significantly reinforced with artillery and had as many as eight divisions - more than other armies of the Leningrad Front. The 54th Army was directly subordinate to the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command, that is, it acted as a separate one. So its commander in rights practically did not differ from the commander of the front. Stalin attached great importance to the de-siege of Leningrad. It is no coincidence that the troops that were in the ring were commanded by the former Chief of the General Staff, General of the Army G.K. Zhukov, and the 54th Army operating from the outer side of the ring - Deputy People's Commissar of Defense Kulik. However, it was not possible to

open the ring in the autumn of 1941. A record of telegraph conversations between Kulik, held on the night of September 14-15, 1941:

Zhukov: Greetings, Grigory Ivanovich! Do you know about my arrival to replace Voroshilov? I would like for you and me to quickly begin work on clearing the territory where we could shake hands and organize the rear of the Leningrad Front. Please briefly report on the situation. In turn, I would like to inform you what is being done near Leningrad. First. The enemy, having captured Krasnoye Selo, is

conducting furious attacks on Pulkovo, in the direction of Ligov. Another focus southeast of Slutsk is the area of Fedorovsky. From this area the enemy is conducting an offensive with eight regiments in the general direction of the city of Pushkin with the aim of linking up in the Pushkin-Pulkovo area. Second. In other

sectors of the front, the situation is the same. The southern group of Astana, consisting of four divisions, is taking measures to get out of the encirclement. Kulik:

Hello. George Konstantinovich! I am very glad to carry out the honorable task of liberating Leningrad together with you. I am also looking forward to meeting you. My situation is the following. First. Over the past two or

three days I have been fighting on my left flank in the Voronov area, that is, on the left flank of the grouping that is going to link up with you. The enemy has concentrated against my main grouping over the past two or three days the following

divisions. I will pass it on to the regiments, because I want to know if there are any other regiments against your front. I'll start from the right: the 424th regiment of the 126th infantry division appeared in the area of Workers' Settlement No. 1, which had not previously been present on my front. There are no other regiments of this division. Either they are in Shlisselburg, or along the Neva and act to the west against you, or in reserve in the Shlisselburg area.

Second. The 20th motorized division operates in the Sinyavin area and to the south, tanks of the 12th Panzer Division were marked with it. Third. The

21st Infantry Division deployed on the Sigolovo-Turyshkino front. Together with it, the 5th Panzer Division operates in the same area in the direction of Slavyanka - Voronovo. Over the past three days, there has been an increased transfer of motorized mechanized parts and tanks from the Lyuban region to Shipki - Turyshkino - Sologubovka. Today at 16.30 tanks were observed to advance (more than 50) in the Sologubovka area on Sigolovo and northeast of Turyshkino. In addition, heavy artillery appeared in the same area. Today I had a battle for mastering Voronov. It was a private operation for the upcoming offensive, but it was not possible to solve this problem. True, there were minor connections here. I did it deliberately, because I did not want to draw large forces into this operation: now I am replenishing my units. The front line occupied by the 54th Army is as follows: Lipka - Workers' Settlement No. 8 - Workers' Settlement No. 7 - Estonsky Settlement - Tortolovo - Myshkino - Porechye - Mikhalevo. The enemy is concentrating a fairly strong grouping on my right flank. I expect

him to go on the offensive from tomorrow. I have taken measures to repel the offensive, I think to repulse his attacks and immediately go on the counteroffensive. Over the past four days, we have destroyed at least 70 tanks. In the

second half of September 13, there was a strong battle in the Gornoye Khandrovo area, where 28 tanks and an infantry battalion were destroyed, but the enemy all the time, especially today, began to show great activity. All. Zhukov: Grigory Ivanovich, thank you for the information. I have an urgent request to you - do not wait for the enemy to attack, but immediately organize artillery preparation and go on the offensive in the general direction of Mga.

Kulik: Understood. I think 16-17th.

Zhukov: 16-17 is too late! The enemy is mobile, we must preempt him. I am sure that if you launch an offensive, you will have great professions. If you still cannot attack tomorrow, I ask you to use all your aviation to defeat the enemy in the area of Poddolovo - Kordelevo - Chernaya Rechka - Annolovo. All these points are located on the Izhora River, 4–5 kilometers southeast of Slutsk. It is necessary to direct strikes here throughout the day, at least in small batches, in order to prevent the enemy from raising his head. But this is like a last resort. I beg you to attack the enemy and move the cavalry behind enemy lines as soon as possible. That's all I wanted to say.

Kulik: Tomorrow I can't go on the offensive, because artillery has not been brought up, interaction has not been worked out on the spot, and not all units have returned to their original positions. I have just been informed that at 11 p.m. the enemy went on the offensive in the area of Shlisselburg-Lipka-Sinyavino-Gontovaya Lipka. The attack is repulsed. If the enemy does not launch a general offensive tomorrow, then I will fulfill your request for aviation actions on the points indicated by you.

Zhukov: The enemy did not go on the offensive, but conducted night power reconnaissance! Every reconnaissance or small action of the enemy is, unfortunately, mistaken by some for an offensive.

It is clear that you primarily care about the well-being of the 54th Army and, apparently, you are not sufficiently concerned about the situation that has developed near Leningrad. You must understand that I have to throw people directly from the factories towards the attacking enemy, without waiting to work out the interaction on the ground. I realized that I can't count on an active maneuver on your part. I will solve the problem myself. I must say that I am struck by the lack of interaction between your group and the front. In my opinion, in your place, Suvorov would have acted differently. Excuse my bluntness, but I'm not up to diplomacy. I wish you

all the best!" Georgy Konstantinovich did not regret the caustic words addressed to Grigory Ivanovich! It was as if he forgot that it was Kulik who once moved him to the upper rungs of the military hierarchy. At the last trial in his life, already looking death in the face, Grigory Ivanovich admitted: "I had a good relationship with Zhukov. He was my nominee. I submitted him for promotion at the time

military operation at Khalkhin Gol. Zhukov showed himself very well there and quickly went to the nomination. Then, in August of the 50th, Zhukov was in deep disgrace, and the defendant, accused under execution articles, had no reason to invent anything about his patronage of Zhukov in the past, only worsening his own situation.

But let's go back to September 1941, near Leningrad. Neither Voroshilov, nor Zhukov, nor Stalin knew that as early as September 6, Hitler had issued "Directive No. 35", declaring Leningrad "a secondary theater of military operations." The commander of Army Group North, Field Marshal Ritter Wilhelm von Leeb, was to limit himself to the blockade of the city and, no later than September 15, transfer both tank groups and a significant part of the aviation to Army Group Center for the upcoming general offensive on Moscow. The assault on Leningrad would have required great sacrifices and considerable time, which Hitler no longer had on the eve of winter. He decided to try to capture the main strategic goal - Moscow, hoping to capture Leningrad later, when its defenders were exhausted by the blockade. True, on September 12, the Fuhrer issued a new directive, in the development of the previous one, which stated that "air and tank forces should not be transferred until a complete blockade is established. Therefore, the date of transfer determined by "Directive No. 35" may be delayed by several days." In fact, it was postponed until September 17th. Before this deadline, it was still not possible to start moving to the Moscow direction of the units of the Center group involved in Ukraine. The Leningrad front had only a few days to hold out, after which the onslaught of the enemy, who had captured the suburbs of Leningrad, was bound to weaken. Zhukov, I repeat, could not have known about these directives of Hitler and believed that the main goal of Army Group North was still the capture of the city. He concentrated the main forces to repel the German offensive in the Pulkovo Heights area. On September 17, on the day when the Germans withdrew the main forces of the 3rd and 4th tank groups and the 8th aviation corps from the battle for Leningrad, a formidable Zhukovsky order appeared: "The Military Council of the Leningrad Front orders to announce to all command, political and private personnel defending the indicated line, what kind of abandonment without

written order of the Military Council of the front and the army of the indicated line, all commanders, political workers and fighters are subject to immediate execution. According to Chief Air Marshal A.E. Golovanov, Zhukov himself carried out this order - he forced the machine gunners to shoot at the retreating battalions.

Leeb continued the offensive on the near approaches to Leningrad, now only with the aim of diverting more forces of the Leningrad Front from the Luban direction, where the 54th Army of Marshal Kulik was advancing towards them in order to break the blockade. Zhukov, on the other hand, believed that the enemy was still striving to capture the city, and concentrated his main forces on the defense of the near approaches to the "cradle of the proletarian revolution", and not on a breakthrough. Even when, after September 16, tank formations ceased to operate near Leningrad and the activity of the Luftwaffe dropped sharply, Georgy Konstantinovich continued to counterattack in the Pulkovo area, and not at Nevskaya Dubrovka, towards the 54th Army. To break the blockade, he used only one rifle division, reinforced by one brigade. These forces were clearly not enough for the offensive. However, on the afternoon of September 14, literally on the eve of the conversation with Kulik, Zhukov, unfortunately, managed to convince the Chief of the General Staff, Marshal Shaposhnikov, that he was right. The commander of the Leningrad Front said: "I will prepare a strike in cooperation with Kulik, but we will be able to carry it out only after the liquidation of the enemy's Krasnoselskaya grouping." And Boris Mikhailovich readily agreed: "Now, of course, the focus should be on eliminating the Krasnoselsky breakthrough, and then on interaction with Kulik."

The task assigned to the 54th Army was objectively impossible under those conditions. The attack was to be made on a narrow sector of the front, in a wooded and swampy area, where the enemy had enough forces to organize a defense, and the numerical superiority of the Soviet troops could not be realized. Kulik

was pressed not only by Zhukov, but also by Stalin. On September 16, Iosif Vissarionovich told the marshal by direct wire: "We must not delay preparations for the offensive, but conduct it decisively in order to open communication with Zhukov. In his conversation with you on September 15, Zhukov outlined the position of the front to you, so your operation must not be delayed. We are very happy that you are making progress. But

keep in mind that if tomorrow you strike hard at the Mga in order to break through or bypass the defenses of the Mga, you will receive from us two good cadre divisions and, perhaps, a new tank brigade. But if you postpone tomorrow's strike, I give you my word that you will not receive two divisions or a tank brigade.

- I will try to follow your instructions and be sure to get You promised," Kulik cheerfully reported.

Before us is some kind of theater of the absurd. Reserves and reinforcements are given to the commander as a reward for good behavior and not for reasons of operational expediency. If you start the offensive on time, you will receive two fresh divisions. If you don't start, you won't get anything. For some reason, Stalin did not think of the simplest solution - if you are not satisfied with the commander of the army, you doubt his abilities, is it better to replace him? The Supreme Commander preferred to play with Kulik like a cat with a mouse. I have not yet removed the command, but I have not given the promised divisions either.

The troops of the 54th Army could not capture Mga. Stalin strongly scolded Kulik for the fact that he never managed to break the blockade ring. Here is the live wire conversation they had on September 20:

"Stalin, In these two days, on the 21st and 22nd, it is necessary to make a breach in the enemy's front and connect with the Leningraders, and then it will be too late (Iosif Vissarionovich still believed that in the very near future the Germans would try to take the city by storm. - **B. S.**). You are very late. We need to make up for lost time. Otherwise, if you are still late, the Germans will have time to turn every village into a fortress, and you will never again have to link up with the Leningraders. Kulik, Just returned from battle. The whole day there was a strong battle for the capture of Sinyavin and for the capture of Voronov.

The enemy went over to counterattack several times, despite the destructive fire from our side (today I used both RSs (Katyusha multiple rocket launchers that had just appeared at the front. - B.S), brought in all the **reserves**), but had no success. Stalin, New divisions and a brigade are given to you not to take the Mga station, but to develop success after the capture of the Mga station. The available forces are quite enough to take more than one Mga station

once, but twice.

Sandpiper. I report that the Mga station cannot be taken with available forces without the

introduction of new parts of the Mga station. Grigory Ivanovich turned out to be absolutely right: there were not enough forces and means to take the ill-fated station that cut off Leningrad from the mainland. But he did not escape the highest wrath. On

September 29, Kulik was recalled from Leningrad to Moscow. After Leningrad, Stalin sent Kulik as a representative of the Stavka to Rostov, ordering him to prevent the enemy from seizing the "gates to the Caucasus." On behalf of the Supreme Marshal, who arrived in Rostov on October 11, he formed a new, 56th, army, which in October was thrown to defend the

approaches to the city. But on the night of November 10, Stalin suddenly rang. Kulik's next business trip turned out to be fatal for his career. In November, German troops broke into the Crimea through the Perekop fortifications and rushed to Sevastopol and the Kerch Peninsula. Stalin sent Kulik to Kerch to save the day. We can learn about how events developed from the transcript of the trial, which took place on February 16, 1942. The military collegium of the Supreme Court tried Grigory Ivanovich for having authorized the withdrawal of Soviet troops from the Kerch Peninsula without the permission of the

Supreme High Command. "Where were you on the night of November 10?" asked presiding The. The. Ulrich.

"In Rostov," Kulik answered. "Who gave you the order to fly to Kerch?" Ulrich continued the interrogation. "Comrade

Stalin called me personally," the marshal told the court. "What did Comrade Stalin say to you?" the chairman inquired kindly. And Kulik told how it happened:

"As far as I remember, Comrade Stalin told me on the phone: "Please, go to Kerch. Help Levchenko (vice admiral, commander of the Crimean troops. - **B.S.**) restore order there. It is necessary to prevent the enemy from entering the Caucasus and to keep the Kerch region. You are given the 302nd division. Promote it as soon as possible." I note that at the trial, Grigory Ivanovich preferred to omit some details from the conversation with Stalin. In an explanatory note regarding the surrender of Kerch, written in the name

Supreme Commander at the end of January 1942, Kulik quoted this conversation in much more detail: "Iosif Vissarionovich then said: "To reinforce the 51st Army, the 302nd Mountain Division, located along the North Caucasian coast, needs to be assembled as soon as possible and move with a forced march to the Kerch Strait. Take steps to use it correctly. Yes, more. We have information that you drink heavily and lead a depraved lifestyle. It is unacceptable". Then it sounded like a terrible warning. Kulik drank no more and no less than most Soviet generals and marshals. But since Iosif Vissarionovich himself accuses you of drunkenness and moral decay, then this is a formidable sign. It's not easy to make such accusations. So, Stalin decided to get rid of him, or, at best, push him far into the shadows.

The judges were very interested in the exact chronology of Kulik's journey from Rostov to Kerch. It turned out that the marshal left Rostov on November 10 at about one in the afternoon and arrived in Krasnodar the same day. From Krasnodar, Grigory Ivanovich continued his journey by car, as the weather was non-flying. This circumstance seemed suspicious to Ulrich, and he

asked: "What plane did you come on?" "On the Douglas," Kulik replied, not seeing the catch. "The weather could change. The plane could have been faster. Why did they leave by car? - the highly experienced military lawyer continued to inquire.

"The weather then was non-flying," Grigory Ivanovich stubbornly continued to repeat. - "I sent the plane on the same day with my adjutant Lieutenant Colonel Valyushkin to Sverdlovsk for my wife." Kulik did not notice

how he fell into a trap. What kind of non-flying weather is there, if the plane calmly flew to Sverdlovsk? And Ulrich continued to drown the completely confused marshal:

"Couldn't you yourself need an airplane?" "It was faulty," Kulik murmured uncertainly, already realizing that he was talking nonsense: it turns out that a faulty plane cannot be sent to Kerch, but to Sverdlovsk, located much further from Krasnodar, is it possible?

Here Vasily Vasilyevich dealt a decisive blow: "Did you send any cargo with the plane?" "Food," admitted Kulik. And how could one not admit

when the court had documents testifying that Marshal of the Soviet Union G.I. Kulik received Sanadee for 85,898 rubles through the head of the Krasnodar military department. 72 kop. food, including almost 6,000 rubles worth of food, was sent by plane "in the direction of Moscow" (obviously, to Sverdlovsk), and another 31,000 in the marshal's personal carriage from Sochi, also "in the direction of Moscow." Yes, during the harsh wartime, Grigory Ivanovich ate with taste and did not forget to supply his wife with delicacies. Lieutenant Colonel G.A. Valyushkin testified during the investigation that "on November 10, by order of Kulik G.I. on his plane flew to Sverdlovsk. The marshal's evacuated wife and my family were in Sverdlovsk at that time. Sending me to Sverdlovsk, the marshal allowed me to stay with my family for three days, and then return by plane to Krasnodar and bring the marshal's wife there. The calculation was such that while I was flying to Sverdlovsk and back, 6-7 days would pass, during which the marshal himself would have time to finish his business in Kerch, return to Krasnodar and meet his wife there. However, it turned out differently. From Krasnodar to Sverdlovsk, I actually flew for 13 days, because due to weather conditions, the plane was not released from a number of airfields for whole days. When I flew from Krasnodar to Sverdlovsk, the marshal asked the pre-regional executive committee Tyulyaev to send something to his family there, which Tyulyaev did. 7 boxes of apples, a box of sausages, 2 boxes of mullet, flour, cereals, butter, sugar and a number of other products were loaded onto the plane for me. What was the cost of these products, I do not know, I also do not know whether money was paid for them (the investigation found that, of course, they were not paid. - **B.S.**). The dispatch, at the direction of Tyulyaev, was carried out by a certain Sanadze, some kind of employee of the military department. To a certain N.N. Sanadze, quartermaster of the 2nd rank, and had to ask Tyulyaev to order "with what funds and articles to write off" 80,231 rubles - Kulik did not pay a penny.

Adjutant Marshal Major M.E. Kanashevich readily told the investigators: "I did not make any purchases of food in Krasnodar, but I knew that when he was there, the marshal had a conversation with the chairman of the regional executive committee, Tyulyaev, so that he would release the food

for him. At the same time, there was no talk about payment, at Kulik's request, Tyulyaev only answered "we will organize", so when the marshal, having finished his business in Krasnodar, flew to Moscow, and I returned here with a wagon, by order of Tyulyaev, he was loaded with products for Kulik: white flour 3 bags of standard, a bag of rice, buckwheat, boxes of 40-50 tangerines, over 1000 pieces of lemons, nuts 5 bags, cognac 200 bottles, port wine 100 bottles, champagne 10 bottles, Ukrainian sausage 40-50 kilograms, smoked sausage about the same amount, a bag of sugar, lamb and pork, I don't know for sure, but not less than 200-250 kg, granular caviar 18 cans, pressed - 20-25 kilos, mullet fish 2 boxes, canned food over 100 cans, fat more than 50 kg. In addition, there were sweets, tea, compotes of various varieties, jam, 40 kilograms, and other products - in general, the car was loaded almost.

When we were still in Krasnodar, after Kulik's flight to Moscow, Tyulyaev, "arranging" food for him, told me that it was possible to go with a wagon from Krasnodar to Sochi and get something there.

I went there with Tyulyaev's assistant - Bongard, and brought to Krasnodar 2 tons of tangerines, 20 bags of prunes, 20 bags of nuts and compote, lemons and jam. Tyulyaev unloaded most of these products in Krasnodar, and then loaded the wagon with other products (the chairman of the regional executive committee remembered the marshal, but did not forget himself. - **B.S.**), and I came to Moscow with them. I brought all of them completely to Moscow, reported this in detail to the marshal, on his instructions the products were transported to his apartment and went to a personal use".

Grigory Ivanovich believed that the war would drag on for several years, and, as it seems, he wanted to provide his beloved wife with everything necessary for the future, up to the day of victory. And I didn't think about whether it was possible to save such an abyss of products at home. Or maybe he thought that Olga would be able to successfully sell the imported perishable delicacies, apples and citrus fruits on the market, and thereby improve her difficult financial situation? After all, it is known how difficult it was for marshal's wives

to live in the Soviet Union! But jokes aside. In the matter of successful self-supply of food, Kulik did not differ much from other Soviet generals and marshals. Impressive, for example, is the list of delicacies and

drinks, which the Military Council of the Western Front handed over to the commander of the 20th Army, General A.A. Vlasov as a gift for the New Year, 1942: 0.5 kg of caviar, 1.0 kg of salmon, 5 boxes of chocolates, 5 bars of chocolate, 1 box of cocoa, a bottle of wine, 6 bottles of cognac, a jar of lemons in sugar, 10 boxes of cigarettes and so on and so forth, up to 2 pairs of woolen linen and one of silk. Yes, and Andrei Andreevich regularly sent parcels with food and clothing to both of his wives (none of them knew about the existence of a rival, being sure that she was the only legal wife of the general), until he was surrounded by the 2nd shock army. For the time being, the passion for gratuitous cognacs, champagne, caviar and balyk got away with it, but if the military leader did something wrong in the eyes of the Supreme, then food sins acted as a weighty (literally - many hundreds of kilograms, if not tons) weight to more serious accusations of conspiracy, treason, cowardice, or disobedience to combat orders. The episode with the plane sent to Sverdlovsk proves that Kulik, going to the Crimea, still

underestimated the tragedy of the situation there, so he was not in too much of a hurry and hoped that in a week he would be able to successfully solve the problems that had developed there. He even sent his personal plane to distant lands, believing that he would manage without it. Now, however, the marshal was made a scapegoat for the surrender of Kerch, and Grigory Ivanovich's inherent love to live in grand style came in very handy. Let's return to the court session on February 16, 1942. Ulrich continued to ask Kulik when and

under what circumstances he got to Kerch. Grigory Ivanovich explained: "I went by car to Temryuk, where I spent the night. At night, due to the impassability, it was impossible to go. On the morning of the 11th I left for Taman, where I arrived in the afternoon of the same day. On the way from Krasnodar to Taman, I saw a fleeing army (those fighters and commanders of the 51st Separate Army who had already been lucky enough to escape from the Kerch Peninsula to Taman. - B.S.). Formed from separate units and military personnel 6-7 barrage detachments. In Taman, he engaged in organizing the defense of the Taman Peninsula and establishing communications with Levchenko and Batov.

"When did you arrive in Kerch?" repeated the chairman of the court.

"- In the afternoon of November 12," the marshal admitted. "When did the Douglas leave Krasnodar?" Ulrich stated. "I don't remember exactly now," Kulik said. - He soon

landed due to a malfunction in the Kuban.

Here, a member of the Court, army commissar of the 1st rank, E.A. Shchadenko, who was in charge of personnel in the People's Commissariat of Defense, with a quite reasonable remark: "They could fly to Krasnodar, but why couldn't they fly further themselves and not send a plane with food for their wife?" "I ask

you not to link this issue with the general issue," Grigory Ivanovich pleaded. But Efim Afanasyevich was inexorable: "Why did you think that the plane was fit for a flight to Sverdlovsk, when you yourself here said that it was out of order?"

"The weather was non-flying," Kulik sang the old song. "- When exactly did you arrive in Kerch on November 12?" Ulrich didn't hesitate. "- In the afternoon," the marshal answered after a pause. "How long have you been in

Kerch?" - asked the new chairman

question.

"About 3 o'clock," the marshal answered honestly.

"How did you get from Taman to Kerch?" - threw Ulrich defendant with a barrage of seemingly innocent questions.

Grigory Ivanovich proudly declared: "I didn't tell anyone and went out on a boat. I could have been sunk by enemy planes."

But, according to Shchadenko, there was nothing to be proud of: "You were driving speedboat. How could they get into it from an airplane? "No, they could have hit," Kulik objected uncertainly. "But did the Germans really know that it was Kulik who was driving?" —

Yefim Afanasyevich scoffed.

"- In the Kerch Bay," Grigory Ivanovich asserted, "I was under fire from both sides.

What the marshal meant here is impossible to understand. Or that it was fired upon not only by the Germans from the Kerch Peninsula, but also, by mistake, by their own from the Taman Peninsula. Or that it was fired upon by both German artillery from the Crimea and enemy planes. In principle, the marshal greatly exaggerated the danger that

was exposed. It is really very difficult for an attack aircraft or a bomber to get into a fast boat. The court proceeded to consider

Kulik's specific actions during his three-hour stay in Kerch. In this regard, Grigory Ivanovich said: “- Levchenko and Batov (acting commander of the Kerch defensive region. - **B.S.**) reported

to me the situation at the front. From their report, it became clear to me that they did not know the situation, since when I drove up to Kerch, I already saw a different situation. “Did you immediately decide to evacuate?” Ulrich asked. “Yes, I made the decision to withdraw,” Kulik admitted. “Did Levchenko and Batov object to you?” the chairman clarified.

“They themselves transferred part of the troops to the Taman Peninsula without me,” the

marshal noted. “But I decided to withdraw only in relation to the remnants. Batov and Nikolaev, a member of the military council, behaved there like a commander, while Levchenko became limp and actually prepared for

surrender.”

“And what did you come for?” Shchadenko asked with hidden mockery. “In fact, I removed Levchenko from

command and instructed him to ensure the transportation of materiel and people to Taman, and entrusted direct command of the defense to Batov.”

“You had at your disposal a cadet brigade and two regiments from the reserve brigade, which you took from Krasnodar,” Shchadenko pressed on Kulik. “They didn’t exist then,” Grigory

Ivanovich justified himself. “They should have arrived.” “- What forces did Kerch hide behind?” Shchadenko asked. “- She was kept

by 2 mountain regiments, each with 5 companies,” Kulik said. - “On the very left flank there

were 500-600 fighters - the remnants of three divisions. There was also the 106th division, consisting of 700 bayonets.

“In addition to these forces, which held Kerch for three days,” Shchadenko specified, “two artillery regiments and two and a half thousand soldiers from the 13th reserve brigade. You took them in Krasnodar.

"- No. This is not so," Grigory Ivanovich objected. "I gave you the order of Comrade Stalin not to take troops with you. Have you violated this order? one deputy people's commissar accused another of lying.

"Yes, I didn't," Kulik agreed. "But the Taman Peninsula was bare." "- At your disposal, in addition to the units

defending Kerch, there should have been more than 7 thousand well-equipped fighters," Yefim Afanasyevich did not let up. "Taman was actually bare," repeated the marshal, who was

increasingly losing hope for a favorable outcome for himself. "Those 7,000 hadn't arrived yet." "Why did you drag units from Krasnodar if you were thinking of leaving Kerch?" -

pressed the defendant Shchadenko. "They wouldn't fit anyway," Grigory Ivanovich repeated in a tired voice.

Here Efim Afanasyevich gave his question a threatening wording, summing up Kulik under

an article about treason: "Did you decide to surrender Kerch to the Germans?" "That's right," the marshal agreed in shock. And only after a pause did he add: "I

had nothing to defend Kerch with. A shabby brew gathered there - just a gang.

"You are slandering the troops of Kerch, calling them a gang," Yefim Afanasyevich exclaimed pathetically. "These 2,600 Soviet fighters, as you yourself said, held Kerch for three days."

"It was only the best of them who fought for every house in Kerch," Kulik made a significant clarification. Further,

another of the judges entered the interrogation - the commander of the Moscow Military District, Colonel-General P.A. Artemiev, who previously served in the NKVD troops: "How did you assess the enemy's forces and on the basis of what data?"

"- I had the opportunity to observe all the approaches to Kerch from one of the heights dominating the entire area. Stayed at this height for two hours. Up to two enemy motorized mech regiments advanced from the south. Our defense was up to the battalion. The enemy had little artillery, but a lot of mortars.

"How many mortars?" Artemyev said.

"At least 50-60," Kulik reported. "How many guns did we have on this side?" asked Pavel Aleksandrovich.

"At least 50-60," the marshal admitted. "So we had a fire advantage?" Artemiev concluded. "- The ratio was in favor of ours," -

without enthusiasm
agreed Grigory Ivanovich.

"- What task was set for 50 guns?" - gently inquired
Colonel General at the Marshal.

"The enemy fell on our batteries and destroyed them with direct fire,"
Kulik was forced to admit. "- What were the
enemy forces from the side of Dzhardzhava?" —

Artemiev continued to inquire. "Two
divisions were advancing," the defendant answered.

"And from our side?" Artemiev asked more and more insistently. "Up to
two

companies were on the defensive," Kulik replied. "Where else
was the enemy?" the general continued
colonel.

"From the side of Caterlez," Kulik could not understand where Artemyev
was

driving. "What did the enemy have here?" - general questions
Colonels were not original.

"Up to one division," Kulik answered curtly. "I ask you
to conclude, defendant Kulik, on the basis of what did you decide to
leave Kerch?" - Artemiev returned to the main point of the accusation.

Shchadenko echoed him: "As you were ordered:
surrender or keep Kerch whatever
no matter what?

"- It was ordered to hold the Kerch Peninsula," the marshal replied in a
monotone echo, who did not have long to wear the marshal's buttonholes.

"Don't you think that, without giving a correct assessment of the whole
situation at the front, you made the decision to withdraw?" Artemyev asked,
trying to demonstrate academic objectivity.

"It is impossible to equate the battered units, the remnants of the broken divisions with combat-ready units," Grigory Ivanovich was indignant. "What is left of the two regiments? In one, the command staff was 100 percent killed. "You yourself were the first to escape from Kerch," Shchadenko threw a grave accusation to his comrade-in-arms in the First Cavalry. "I am not a coward. I didn't run away, "as if he didn't learn his lesson a loser, Kulik justified himself.

At this moment, Ulrich again joined the interrogation: "- What did Levchenko and Batov report to you about the forces of the enemy?" "The enemy had up to four divisions at the front and one to one and a half divisions in the rear," Kulik said. It should be noted here that at the very beginning of the process, he said that "the enemy pressed on us with 5 divisions", to which Artemyev objected: the Germans had only 2 divisions. "How is it - 2 divisions? How could he defeat our 6 divisions with his 2 divisions. Now, when the court session was coming to an end, Ulrich reminded Grigory Ivanovich: "During the investigation, you showed this: "Levchenko and Batov did not have exact data about the enemy's forces. However, personally observing the picture of the battle, I determined the balance of forces - as one to three in favor of the enemy.

"Yes," Kulik confirmed, "they didn't have exact data." Let us interrupt for a moment the citation of the court transcript and turn to those facts that became firmly known only after the end of the war. It turned out that both Grigory Ivanovich and his judges were wrong in assessing the German forces on the Kerch Peninsula. The first exaggerated the number of the enemy, and the second - downplayed. In fact, 6 Soviet divisions on the Kerch Peninsula (four from the 51st Separate Army and one from the Separate Primorskaya, as well as the 306th Mountain Rifle Division urgently transferred from the Caucasus just before the start of the evacuation and the 9th Marine Brigade) were opposed by 42 th German army corps, consisting of three infantry divisions - the 73rd, 46th and 170th. Even taking into account the fact that the divisions of the 51st Army suffered heavy losses when the Germans broke through the Perekop and Yushun positions at the end of October, the overall numerical superiority in the area of the Kerch Peninsula, as well as superiority in artillery, remained at

the Soviet side. However, even before the arrival of Kulik, the Red Army soldiers were seized by panic, and Vice Admiral G.I., who commanded them. Levchenko and Lieutenant General P.I. Batov let go of control and resigned themselves to the idea that they would have to retreat to Taman, where many fighters and commanders had already arbitrarily crossed. On November 10, when Kulik was just getting ready to fly out of Rostov, Levchenko, Batov and Corps Commissar A.S. Nikolaev sent a telegram to Stalin in Moscow: "The situation is extremely difficult, the units are completely demoralized and unfit for combat. They are unable to hold the Kerch Peninsula. Due to the fact that it is not possible to hold Kerch with the available forces, it is necessary either to further strengthen this direction with two divisions, or to resolve the issue of evacuating troops from the Kerch region. True, an assurance was immediately contained that the command required "the troops to firmly hold the Kerch and Sevastopol bridgeheads." However, new units from Transcaucasia could be transferred to hold Kerch only after 12-15 days, and there was no hope that the demoralized remnants of the 51st Army, even reinforced by two combat-ready regiments of the 302nd Division, would hold out in the city for another two weeks. At the trial, Shchadenko angrily threw in Kulik's face: "You did not proceed from a correct assessment of the enemy's forces. You need to speak bluntly - you just chickened out. "No, I didn't get scared,"

Grigory Ivanovich justified himself. - "I

after all, he rode a boat during the day under fire and did not flinch.

"- It turns out that neither you nor the local command had any approximately accurate data on the enemy's forces?" Ulrich concluded. "I thought the ratio was one to three," he

said on

this is a

marshal. "You said that from the same height you could freely observe the whole picture of the battle on the outskirts of Kerch. Everything around was visible. Why didn't they install guns and machine guns there?" - Grigory Ivanovich was convicted of incompetence by

Artemiev. "Our troops had fire superiority. And they would have watered from the height of the enemy," Schadenko echoed him. Well, everyone imagines himself a strategist, seeing the battle from the side.

"It was already late," Kulik insisted. - "Under enemy mortar fire could not have done this.

"- Did you have a plan for the defense of Kerch?" Ulrich asked. "I gave the order—not a step back," Kulik evaded a direct answer. He didn't have any plan: the marshal immediately upon arrival in Kerch realized that the city could not be held.

"- And where did this line pass, from which "not a step back"? Artemyev sneered again. "-

He was indicated in Batov's order," Kulik diplomatically avoided answering.

Then Ulrich turned to the case file: "During the investigation, you testified: "When I arrived in the Kerch region, I not only did not organize defense, but also did not take measures to this end. Whether the command of the direction (Levchenko, Batov) had a defense plan, I don't know, I didn't ask them about it. Arriving in Kerch, I immediately decided to withdraw, sanctioning the evacuation that was already underway."

"- This does not apply to tough defense," - confused Kulik got more and more confused.

"- If "not a step back", then it means a tough defense," Artemyev specified. - "What did you order the division commander, leaving the command post?" "I

ordered the enemy to counterattack," Kulik honestly admitted. "How can

two regiments counterattack with two companies? This is at least idiocy," Pavel Aleksandrovich was indignant. "There was

no other way out," Kulik answered bitterly. - "It was necessary to save the troops from capture." "What have you

done to eliminate panic?" Artemyev asked. "I thought that we would not be able to give a fight in

Kerch," Grigory Ivanovich tried to convince the judges of the correctness of his decision. - "It was necessary to retreat to the Taman Peninsula, there to put the units in order and organize defense. And here - only trifle."

"Is Kerch a trifle?" - the person present was indignant meeting, USSR Prosecutor Bochkov.

Artemiev repeated his question: "What did you do to eliminate the panic?"
"- What

I've done?" thought Grigory Ivanovich. "I ordered Batov to organize defense and generally organize everyone who can still fight. Levchenko ordered to deal **with** the head of the flotilla to transport troops from Kerch to Taman. I instructed the chief of staff and the head of the Special Department to receive those transported on the Taman Peninsula and organize defense there. "What part did you personally take in this?" - asked tricky

the question is not appeased Artemyev.

"I myself then went to Taman," Grigory Ivanovich informed the court ingenuously, not realizing that this fact could be interpreted as a manifestation of cowardice. Although, if you figure it out, what was the marshal to do at that moment in Kerch? Raise a company to counterattack? So this is not a marshal's business - an intelligent captain or senior lieutenant will do much better. Two regiments of the 302nd Mountain Rifle Division brought in by Kulik, of course, could not improve things. However, the marshal's judges did not ask such questions. The verdict was known in advance. It was clearly dictated by the Supreme Commander himself, who did not forget his "old friend". Ulrich and his colleagues had only to bring the legal comedy to an end.

"- Did you clearly imagine how the enemy could transfer his forces across the strait?" - Artemyev turned to Kulik, in February 42 he already knew well that in November 41 the Germans in the Crimea had practically no landing craft and they could not land on Taman then, with all their desire. But Kulik did not know about this in the days of the battles for Kerch. On the contrary, from the very beginning of the war, the Soviet command in the Crimea, the same Levchenko, Batov and Batov's predecessor as commander of the 51st Army F.I. Kuznetsov, feared naval and airborne assaults, which is why they threw half their forces to protect the coast.

"I thought that the enemy could drop troops on the Taman Peninsula," Grigory Ivanovich did not dissemble. Here he felt no danger to himself. Moreover, Stalin himself in a telephone conversation demanded "to prevent the enemy from entering the Caucasus."

Members of the court continued to pester Kulik with unpleasant questions. Obviously, the generals were getting taller in their own

eyes, thanks to the fact that they could now mock the disgraced marshal with impunity. "But

didn't you think that by hastily transferring your command post to the Taman Peninsula, you could further demoralize our troops?" - it was Artemyev who continued to accuse Grigory Ivanovich of cowardice. Shchadenko echoed him: "After all, you appeared in Kerch, stayed for about three hours, two of them stood at a height and immediately back."

"- In general, let's get

a boat and drape on?" - summed up Artemiev. "I thought that there was

nothing more for me to do there," Kulik told the truth. "The issue has already been resolved. It was necessary to fight on the Taman Peninsula, so as not to let the enemy into the North Caucasus. "But you received

an order from the People's Commissar of Defense to hold Kerch?" Artemyev feigned surprise. "- I thought that Batov in

Kerch could handle it himself. I saw the most difficult thing in stopping the troops on the Taman Peninsula and organizing defense from them there, "Grigory Ivanovich explained his decision. The judges were

pressing. The pace of questions increased. Artemyev: "How do you regard your hasty departure from Kerch?" Kulik: "Correct." Shchadenko: "Did you get permission from the People's Commissar of Defense for this?" Kulik: "I had no other choice." Ulrich (interrupting the defendant): "The order of the Headquarters clearly set the task." Shchadenko (interrupting the chairman): "You received an order personally from Comrade Stalin." Among other things, the generals were in a hurry to testify to their reverent attitude towards the Supreme and noble indignation at the failure to comply with Stalin's order. Kulik surrendered: "I am

guilty of having exceeded my power and did not comply with the order to defend Kerch. But this is not from cowardice, but because he wanted to ensure the defense of the Taman Peninsula.

"You yourself ran away and actually gave the order to everyone to run away," Shchadenko demonstrated righteous anger. Yefim Afanasyevich was afraid that he might still be reminded of his former closeness to the marshal, who had now clearly fallen into disgrace.

"I ran away?" Kulik was indignant. "-

Then who? Me, right? Shchadenko retorted. "You

violated orders?" Ulrich joined the choir of accusers. "Yes, I did," Kulik

answered in a low voice. "The oath was broken. Our combat

oath," Shchadenko fumed. "I violated it, but not because of alarmism or malicious

intent," Grigory Ivanovich repented. Shchadenko didactically remarked: "We are talking about the

fulfillment of a combat order. How do you evaluate such a soldier, a commander who does not follow a combat order?" "You need to shoot him if he harmed the country," Kulik gave a

completely expected answer. However, he immediately added: "But I didn't have a flight, but there was a flight, Batov was there."

"- What can I say - it was your flight," summed up the first half of the court session Shcha-denko. After the break, Artemiev

returned to the topic of Kulik's journey with Caucasus to Crimea: "What is the distance from Krasnodar to Kerch?" "More than two hundred kilometers," Kulik replied. "Did you spend more than two days?" - reproached Marshal Artemiev.

"The road was simply impassable," Kulik complained. "The cars had to be abandoned. They pulled it out with tractors."

"Why did you stay in Taman?" Artemiev snapped sharply. "I deliberately stayed there to organize defense," Grigory Ivanovich declared almost proudly. "And what did you do

there?" Artemiev continued the interrogation. "- Took measures to prevent the landing of the enemy landing," Kulik repeated for the umpteenth time.

"- How do you assess the actions of the general, who not only does not fulfill the combat order, but does not even make attempts to fulfill it?" - stubbornly let Artemyev marshal under the execution article. "I thought then that the Headquarters

did not know the real situation," Kulik answered not very confidently.

"- After all, the Headquarters confirmed its order for the second time to you. active defense of Kerch? Pavel Aleksandrovich insisted.

"That's why I'm being judged," remarked Grigory Ivanovich gloomily. "I disobeyed the order, but not out of malice." However, from repeated repetition, the marshal's arguments did not become more convincing for the judges. "It turns out that you didn't

want to keep Kerch, you were clearly told: die, but defend," stated the inexorable Artemiev. "I did not leave out of cowardice," Grigory Ivanovich pleaded. - "I thought that in Kerch I could not give a general offensive, and therefore I decided to withdraw." "One of two things, defendant Kulik: either you are a coward or a traitor," summed up the

inexorable Artemyev. Grigory Ivanovich understood that it was better to admit that he was a coward than a traitor, but he continued to stand his ground. He asked to interrogate the commanders of the divisions defending Kerch in order to "establish that I took all possible measures, and thanks to this, ours held out in Kerch for three days."

The judges did not agree with the marshal and did not call the commanders to court, not wanting to drag out the process. But they read to Kulik the directives of the Stavka, which spoke of the need for a stubborn defense on the Kerch Peninsula. Here is one of them, dated November 14, 1941 and signed by the Chief of the General Staff, Marshal B.M. Shaposhnikov: "The retention of the Kerch region should not be made dependent on the transport of carts and heavy artillery to the Taman Peninsula, but on the decision to hold Kerch at all costs and not allow the enemy to occupy this region. In these types, you need to pay attention primarily to the defense of Kerch, transferring, if necessary, the rest of the 302nd division to the Kerch Peninsula. This telegram was a response to Kulik and Levchenko's appeals received on November 13. Kulik reported: "Fighting is going on at an accelerated pace on the line of Cape Tarkhan, heights 131.7 and 62.4, Mount High, Skasievo-Fontan, Dzhardzhava and the southern outskirts of Kerch.

We are rapidly transferring carts, artillery and equipment to the Taman Peninsula. The defense on the western coast of the Taman Peninsula is occupied by Cape Litvin, the Maly Kut cordon, Gorelaya Mountain - a rifle brigade armed by me at the expense of universities in Krasnodar,

Taman, height 63.4. Krotkoye, and further along the southern coast up to Blagoveshchenskaya, is defended by 302 divisions without two regiments. According to the availability of transportation means, a two-day army transportation plan was drawn up. I am taking measures to contain the enemy at the occupied line. Levchenko, on the other hand, informed Stalin about the actual evacuation of Kerch: "The troops of the Kerch direction have recently suffered heavy losses, and the leading battles are extremely tired. The front is held back exclusively by two regiments of the newly arrived 302nd division and a group of stable fighters who

remained in the divisions (51st Army. - **B.S.**). The enemy presses with mortars and manpower. The troops, lacking sufficient automatic weapons and mortars, lost all resistance.

Today, I have decided to ferry from Kerch to the Taman Peninsula: valuable equipment, heavy artillery, special vehicles, excess vehicles." Well, we have always valued technology more

than people. Gordey Ivanovich Levchenko probably understood that the infantry would not hold out without heavy artillery, and in his heart he had already come to terms with the loss of the Kerch Peninsula. It only remained to prepare the higher authorities somehow more delicately to realize the unpleasant fact. After all, it was necessary to violate the order of the Headquarters of November 7, signed by Stalin, People's Commissar of the Navy N.G. Kuznetsov and Shaposhnikov, demanding to organize an active defense of the Kerch Peninsula, and Stalin's order, transmitted on November 9 by Shaposhnikov: to conduct a tough defense in Kerch. The wise Boris Mikhailovich Shaposhnikov, realizing from the telegrams of Levchenko and Kulik that the evacuation to Taman was already in full swing, decided to send such a message, which at the same time contained both permission for evacuation and a demand to stubbornly defend the Kerch Peninsula. When, at half past three on November 15, Kulik reported on the low combat effectiveness of the 51st Army, the small number of its divisions, and also that the enemy had already broken into Kerch, Grigory Ivanovich believed that it was necessary to withdraw troops to Taman. It was then that Shaposhnikov sent him an answer worthy of Tsar Solomon: "The Headquarters of the Supreme High Command believes that first you need to remove artillery and equipment from the Kerch Peninsula, and then withdraw the rifle units,

which should be firmly held in the eastern part of the peninsula. Receipt confirm. On behalf of the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command B. Shaposhnikov. Understand as you know:

either withdraw all the troops to Taman (in any case, the infantry will not be able to fight without artillery), or continue to hold the Kerch Peninsula to the last man. Depending on how Stalin ultimately viewed the surrender of Kerch, the Chief of the General Staff could point to one or another point of his message. In the meantime, on November 16, Kulik reported to Headquarters: "On the night of November 16, 1941, the main forces of units of the 51st Army are crossing to the Taman Peninsula. Artillery and weapons have been taken out." Then he was not blamed for the surrender of Kerch. Now, in February 1942, Kulik was tried for this.

Grigory Ivanovich stated that he was only familiar with the last directive of November 14, which Shaposhnikov demanded "to keep Kerch at all costs." Kulik, however, admitted that "he had a personal order from Comrade Stalin. When I received the fourth, for me the first, directive (dated November 14. - **B.S.**), then by that time it was already clear to me that we could no longer hold out in Kerch we can."

"Why did you consider it possible not to fulfill categorical orders of the Headquarters? Ulrich asked menacingly.

"Yes, I am to blame for this," admitted Grigory Ivanovich. "But I didn't have the strength to defend Kerch." "- No!

You had enough troops for a tough defense of Kerch," Shchadenko objected. Here Kulik involuntarily

blurted out: "I did not want to go to get into an environment with units that, wait for it, would surrender to the enemy." Grigory Ivanovich, of course, does not fall into captivity wanted.

Shchadenko did not let up: "You knew that you were categorically ordered to hold Kerch. Comrade Stalin, the Supreme Commander-in-Chief, summoned you and personally spoke to you on the telephone. Was it clear to you that the main purpose of your trip was to defend Kerch?" "Yes, it was clear to me that the purpose of my trip was hold Kerch," Kulik repeated lostly.

"You drove for a very long time," Yefim Afanasyevich started the old song, despite the fact that you had a Douglas. You could very well

On November 10, fly to Kerch.

"No, I couldn't," Kulik repeated. - "The weather was non-flying".

"You wereted about three days," Shchadenko continued to reprimand Marshal. - "Only on the 12th we arrived in Kerch, instead of being there on the 10th. And when they arrived, they did nothing for defense, but gave the order to withdraw. Is it clear to you that this order of yours was not in the interests of the Motherland? If this, as you say, is not cowardice, then this is treason." And after a pause, he added insinuatingly: "You acted consciously, didn't you?"

"No, not cowardice and not betrayal," Grigory Ivanovich assured the judges. "I just didn't see any other way. acted consciously".

"- And when you again received a categorical order from the Headquarters to defend Kerch, you again ignored it. What is this - not a conscious betrayal? - put pressure on Marshal Shchadenko.

"I did not want to go to the point of sacrificing all the troops. I decided to withdraw at least part of it," Kulik finally revealed the true motive for his actions.

"How long have you been connected with the Germans?" - unexpectedly turned on interrogation prosecutor Bochkov, directly accusing Kulik of espionage. "What nonsense?" Grigory Ivanovich flared up.

"I repeat," narrowing his eyes ominously, he fixed his eyes on Marshal Bochkov, "how long have you been connected with the Germans?"

"I have no idea," Kulik answered not very clearly. "- How then to explain that the Germans sent out to all fronts your photographs? - laid out the prosecutor's main trump card.

"- How do I know?" - Grigory Ivanovich was surprised (and really, why should he be responsible for the actions of the Germans?). "I only know that the Germans believed that I, with my adjutant and my wife, were in their rear and commanded an alleged partisan detachment. Our intelligence allegedly possessed these data."

Here Bochkov applied the old investigative technique, designed to intimidate the defendant and force him to confess: "I confirm that we know everything for sure. You are invited to tell everything sincerely, honestly "(so that later, with a calm soul, you could put it against the wall! - **B.S.**).

"- Where?" Kulik continued to wonder. "I'm being honest. How can I be with the Germans?"

"Why did they deliberately hand over Kerch to the Germans?" - pricked Marshal Shchadenko. "- /

sensibly assessed the strength of our resistance and from this proceeded, making a decision to withdraw, "Kulik retorted.

Bochkov could not calm down in any way: "For the third time, it is offered to you honestly tell everything about your connections with the Germans.

"- At least in the thousandth," - Grigory Ivanovich found the strength to sarcastically, - "To be honest, no." After a

new break, Ulrich turned to the materials of the preliminary investigation and asked to confirm the following testimony: "Having decided to withdraw upon arrival in Kerch, I objectively did not change anything in the situation that had developed there, only introducing planning and order into the withdrawal to Taman itself." Kulik readily confirmed: "I took evacuation and cover into tough hands. I led this retreat." Ulrich grinned: "Further in your testimony it is written: "I admit that I violated the order and my military duty and,

instead of organizing the defense of Kerch and its regions, without the permission of the Stavka, I decided to evacuate. This is my fault." Correctly written?

"That's right," Kulik had to agree. "I violated the order. I was then confronted with the fact that the operation had already been lost. I could not do otherwise, since the remaining troops were already poorly combat-ready.

"Did you have a connection with Moscow from Kerch?" Ulrich asked. Kulik explained:

"Only on the 13th was a wire connection established. And before that, we managed to establish contact by radio. I then asked the Headquarters to remove Levchenko from his post and allow me to organize the defense of Taman "(which the Germans at that moment were not going to capture. - **B.S.)**".

"Isn't it true that you overestimated the strength of the enemy?" - Artemiev saddled his favorite horse. This topic was immediately picked up by Shchadenko: "You ripped off two brigades. You have a lot of power."

"I was not mistaken in assessing the forces of the enemy and ours," Kulik stood his

ground. "You are talking about organizing a tough defense by you. But did you yourself leave Kerch?" Shchadenko continued to accuse the marshal

of cowardice. "- I gave the order - not a step back!" - Kulik, from excitement, did not understand the comic effect of this phrase. It turned out: he ordered others to stand to the last, and he himself was immediately evacuated to the safe Taman for the time being. Yefim Afanasyevich was not slow to take advantage of this circumstance and sneered: "Did you run away

yourself?" "I thought that my place was in Temryuk," Kulik was

somewhat confused. "Have you received permission from the Stavka to leave Kerch?" Ulrich asked in his usual calm voice.

"No," Kulik did not dissemble, realizing that the court knew this anyway. - "I left without the permission of the Headquarters. But this gave me the opportunity to organize the defense of the Taman Peninsula.

"Did you personally leave Kerch on the evening of the twelfth?" Ulrich stated. "Yes,"

Kulik confirmed. "- And the evacuation ended from the 15th to the 16th?" Vasily Vasilyevich continued. "Yes,

Mithridates was occupied by the Germans shortly after my departure, and on the 15th they were already fighting in the city itself," Kulik said about the circumstances under which the evacuation to Taman took place. Back on November 17, in the last report on the battles on the Kerch Peninsula, he reported by phone to Headquarters: "Units of the 51st Army of the Kerch direction completely crossed to the Taman Peninsula in the afternoon of 16. 11. The crossing took place in difficult conditions of stormy weather with a frost of 12 °".

Ulrich wanted to clarify some details: "Leaving Kerch, who was left in charge?" Kulik replied that "he left Batov as the head of the fortified area, and Nikolaev as the commissar."

"To whom did Levchenko obey?" asked the chairman of the court an important question. The fact is that Vice Admiral Levchenko in November of the 42nd formally remained the commander of the Crimean troops and

Batov's chief, and Kulik did not have the authority to remove him. Grigory Ivanovich explained how he got out of the situation: "I set Levchenko the task of ensuring the evacuation, and Batov the defense. Both were directly subordinate to me."

"So you didn't have any criminal connection with the German command?" Ulrich returned to the most dangerous question for the defendant. "Categorically not," Kulik assured.

Further, the judges once again asked how long the marshal had been surrounded in Belarus, whether he had met the Germans there and, having received a negative answer, after a ten-minute break, they declared the trial completed and gave the defendant the last word. It was hard for the marshal. Grigory Ivanovich felt that the guilty verdict dictated from above was a foregone conclusion, but he tried once again to gather together all the arguments in his defense: "I made the decision to withdraw consciously. I weighed the whole situation. I believed that the enemy could easily cross over to the Caucasus. I knew that there, on the Taman Peninsula, in fact, there were no our troops. The remnants of the 51st Army are exhausted, part without weapons, stricken with panic. Such troops could be brought into Christian form only after the retreat to Taman. Based on all this, I decided to leave Kerch and defend the Taman Peninsula. If I had a connection with Moscow, then I would have received permission from the Headquarters for this. I would prove that this is the only correct way out - otherwise the enemy will be in the North Caucasus.

The first task - to defend Kerch - I did not complete. That's what I'm being judged for. But the second, no less important, task - to stop the army and defend the Caucasus from the Taman Peninsula - was completed. So on my return I reported to Comrade Stalin. He scolded me.

I provided cover for the withdrawal of our units from Kerch with artillery fire from the Chushka Spit, and the enemy met already strong defenses here. I exceeded my rights not because I was a traitor or a coward, but because I decided to prevent the enemy from occupying the North Caucasus. After all, from Taman to the east everything was bare.

Shchadenko could not stand it and, contrary to all customs and rules, interrupted the last word of the defendant: "It's not true! There were 12 brigades in the North Caucasus at that time."

Kulik, however, remembered better how things were in mid-November 1941, and firmly defended his position: "No! There were no troops then. I think that in the conditions of that situation my decision was the only correct one. I didn't see any other way.

I thought, and still think, that no other decision could have been made. But I am to blame for not following the order of the Headquarters on the defense of Kerch. I affirm that if I had arrived in Kerch 5-10 days earlier, then I could have held Kerch. And then I arrived at the cap analysis.

When deciding my case, I ask you to take into account that I never even thought of betraying the Motherland, I cannot be a traitor to the Motherland. I never had any connection with the

Germans. I know that there was a lot of testimonies against me from enemies ("a lot of testimonies" were from all other military leaders, including Timoshenko, Shchadenko, even the legendary Budyonny; but only Stalin himself decided against whom to use the available compromising evidence, as a rule, fabricated in NKVD - **B.S.**). Where they got it from, I have no idea! In Spain, he worked with the enemies of the people, not knowing that they were enemies (in the same Spain, another hero of the Kerch epic, Batov, also worked with the same enemies, but he was not blamed for this. - B.S.) .

I remembered once I had a conversation with the German military attaché in Moscow. His surname seems to be Kes-ling (actually - Kestring. - **B.S.**). At a banquet during the Finnish war, he asked me how our automatic weapons work at minus 40. He spoke Russian. I didn't speak to any of the foreigners anymore."

"What did you say to the German attache?" the vigilant Ulrich immediately pricked up his ears. But Kulik reassured him: "He answered: nothing, we are working, we are fighting. I ask the prosecutor's statement that I am a traitor to be thoroughly analyzed. I can't be a traitor. I wasn't a coward either. He always considered the Germans a serious opponent. He was especially afraid of their chemistry, but he never bowed before them. He did not have a defeatist attitude. The Germans have one trump card - tanks, planes and mortars. The rest of them is nonsense. If you press a little, they run away ten times faster than ours (here we have pure poetic fantasy, since Grigory Ivanovich had never seen the Germans running, and even ten times faster than the Russians. - B.S.) .

I am politically pure, I have never joined any anti-party groups. Before Comrade Stalin, I am very

guilty. Comrade Stalin made me, a peasant, a member of the Central Committee, a Marshal of the

Soviet Union. What, you ask, was the General Staff watching? After all, he did not know the situation. The enemy drove an army from all over the Crimea to Kerch. She became a gang. Yes, gang! They drank, women were raped. How could I hold Kerch with such an army? I arrived late - it was already impossible to save the

situation. Artemiev, with the air of a connoisseur, said: "Forget about the strait and overestimate the strength of the enemy.

Kulik objected: "It was easy for the Germans to make a tip across the strait (here Grigory Ivanovich clearly overestimated the capabilities of the German engineering troops - even in the 43rd year, when the Wehrmacht controlled the Taman Peninsula, the construction of the cable car took more than four months, while the Germans They did not have the Kerch Peninsula in November 1941, while the Kerch Strait froze only a month and a half after the evacuation of the troops of the 51st Army. - **B.S.**). I repeat - I have already arrived at the hat analysis.

Do I deny that I violated the combat order? But he violated it not out of malice." "What

measures did you take yourself?" Artemiev asked a question at the end. "- One

said - leave, do not interfere with others, and the rest - not a step back, cover the evacuation!" Kulik stated his position very succinctly. "This has already been

done before you," Pavel Aleksandrovich dismissively threw. "No," the marshal objected,

"before me, Batov and Levchenko only squabbled among themselves. I repeat again: I wanted one thing - not to let the enemy into the North Caucasus. True, I did not have permission to withdraw from Kerch. "Do you have everything?"

Ulrich interrupted Kulik. "Yes," Grigory Ivanovich confirmed. The court retired for deliberation. However, the verdict was known in advance. So far, the angry accusations of treason were intended only to frighten Kulik. As a result, Grigory Ivanovich was charged only with Article 193, paragraph 21 "b" of the Criminal Code of the RSFSR (military official

crime) - failure to comply with a combat order. The court petitioned the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR to deprive Grigory Ivanovich Kulik of the titles of Hero of the Soviet Union and Marshal of the Soviet Union, as well as all government awards. On February 19, 1942, the Presidium of the Supreme Council adopted a corresponding resolution. Grigory Ivanovich was demoted to major general. Thank you, even though the orders were returned three months later (with the exception of the Golden

Star of the Hero). Let's think about what would have changed if Grigory Ivanovich had not sent the plane to Sverdlovsk and arrived in Kerch on November 11, and not November 12? Never mind! By that time, the 51st Army had already lost its combat effectiveness, and Levchenko and Batov were set to evacuate on the 10th. And, I think, Kulik was not primarily thinking about Taman's safety. The defense of the North Caucasus was an excuse before the judges, allowing them to refer to the second part of the Stalinist order. The marshal was not such a fool not to understand: it's not so easy for the Germans to cross the Kerch Strait, the preparation of the landing force will require much more time than 15 days, during which fresh divisions from Transcaucasia were supposed to approach Taman. But the marshal involuntarily let it slip at the trial when he said that he wanted to evacuate the 51st Army in order to bring it into a Christian form on Taman. He could not directly say what moved him Christian mercy. Grigory Ivanovich did not want the senseless death of the soldiers and saw their only salvation in evacuation. The few fresh units that arrived with the marshal could not save the situation. They had to be brought into battle separately, only increasing the total number of victims from the Red Army. The retreat to Taman saved 11.5 thousand soldiers and commanders and 2000 guns from death and captivity. And near Leningrad, organizing an offensive to de-blockade the city, Grigory Ivanovich took care of the people and did not want to throw them into poorly prepared attacks. For which he received an angry rebuke from Zhukov, who adhered to completely different principles about saving soldiers' lives. At a meeting of the senior command staff in December 1940, Kulik stated in a fit of temper: "Where wood is cut down, chips fly there. But it is necessary that the chips were smaller. Crying over the fact that someone was shot somewhere is not worth it. " However, Grigory Ivanovich himself really tried to do so,

so that there were fewer chips, so that the Red Army did not die in vain. Which is probably why he suffered in the end. Stalin was irritated by excessive concern for people - after all, we do not have irreplaceable ones.

At first it seemed to Kulik that he got off relatively lightly for Kerch. When on November 18, 1941, the marshal reported to the Headquarters on how the troops withdrawn to the Taman Peninsula were being deployed, and raised the question of replacing Levchenko with Batov, he emphasized: "From 12.11. I'm actually in charge." Stalin agreed with Kulik and Levchenko was dismissed. Moreover, on December 1, Gordey Ivanovich was arrested. Vice Admiral was charged with treason due to failure to comply with the order of the Headquarters to hold Kerch. Morally broken for a month in the dungeon, Levchenko testified during interrogation on January 1, 1942: "My criminal activity was expressed in the fact that, without following the order of the Headquarters, I surrendered the city of Kerch to the enemy. One of the circumstances that hastened the surrender of this strategically important city to the enemy was the arrival at the front headquarters of the authorized State Defense Committee Kulik, who, instead of prompting or correcting me in those criminal actions (it's great to say: "correct me in criminal actions"! - **B.S.**), which I allowed, aggravated them with my defeatist moods and actions.

Maybe Gordey Ivanovich was just trying to shift his blame to another commander? But the subsequent question by investigators Pavlovsky and Likhachev, who asked to dwell on the role of Kulik in more detail, proves that it was they who suggested what kind of evidence should be given against Kulik. It is unlikely that the vice admiral would have dared to directly accuse the marshal, deputy people's commissar of defense and authorized GKO, and even considered a personal friend of Stalin, if he had not been sure of the favorable attitude of the investigators to accusations of this kind. Levchenko testified that

Kulik spent only two and a half hours in Kerch on November 12: "After Kulik got acquainted with the situation, I asked him to send us the rest of the division given to me by the Headquarters (we are talking about the 302nd Mountain Rifle Division - **B.S.**). Kulik replied to my request: "I won't give you any more units, the situation at the front is hopeless, save the equipment."

By this very Kulik, instead of intervening and restoring order in the troops in order to eliminate confusion and panic, gave a clearly defeatist instruction, directing our attention not to organizing the defense of the city, but to surrendering it to the enemy (as if even before Kulik's arrival, the attention of Levchenko and Batov was not sent for evacuation! - **B.S.**). In accordance with this, Kulik suggested that we draw up a plan for the evacuation of materiel from Kerch to Taman. Having developed the plan and familiarized Kulik with it, I was instructed to immediately begin its implementation in such a way that the removal of equipment would be completed in two days. Seeing that the removal of the materiel from Kerch would finally undermine the resistance of the troops, I began to ask Kulik to give the order to surrender Kerch to the enemy. "And what did Kulik say to that?" - asked

investigator.

Levchenko admitted in response: "I did not receive a written order from Kulik to surrender Kerch, but he told me: "You have a plan, and act on it." I understood this instruction of Kulik in such a way that after the removal of the material part from Kerch, the city must be surrendered.

During further interrogation, it turned out that Kerch was surrendered on November 15, three days after receiving the corresponding instructions from Kulik. With the approval of Levchenko, Batov ordered the troops to withdraw to Taman. To a direct question why the order to keep Kerch was not carried out, Gordey Ivanovich answered as follows: "I admit that I surrendered Kerch to the enemy without permission, contrary to the instructions of the Headquarters. The reason for this was the fact that the troops in the city, as a result of the panic and confusion I showed, as well as my defeatist mood, were in a state of incapacity and, being left to themselves, could not resist even a slight onslaught of the enemy. A significant role in this criminal act was also played by Kulik's instruction, which I unquestioningly, despite its harmfulness, complied with. The fact that Levchenko succumbed to panic and lost control of the troops was also mentioned by Kulik at the trial.

To listen to Gordey Ivanovich, it turns out that if it were not for Kulik, he would, despite the panic and defeatist moods, still hold Kerch. Miracles and more!

January 25, 1942 Levchenko for the surrender of Kerch was sentenced by the Military Collegium of the Supreme Court to 10 years in prison. Six days later, the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR replaced the imprisonment with sending to the front and lowered Gordey Ivanovich in rank to captain 1st rank. Levchenko was appointed commander of the Kronstadt naval base. His fate was much happier than the fate of Kulik. Already in 1944, Levchenko was reinstated in the rank of vice admiral and in the post of deputy people's commissar of the Navy. It can be assumed that the whole deal with the perpetrators of the loss of the Kerch Peninsula was started mainly in order to topple Kulik, who was no longer allowed to rise again to the highest rungs of the military hierarchy. Probably, Stalin decided that for one reason or another it was time to put the "old friend" out of service - either for protesting against the repressions of 1937-38, or for the desire not to recklessly abandon troops for slaughter. Levchenko's

testimony against Kulik was immediately put into motion. On January 26, the day after the trial of the hapless commander of the Crimean troops, Beria sent Stalin a copy of Levchenko's January 1 interrogation protocol. In a cover letter, Lavrenty Pavlovich noted that "Levchenko showed that Colonel General Kuznetsov, by his actions, expressed in the consistent surrender of the Perekop-Ishun positions without offering serious resistance to the enemy and, without organizing the construction of defense in depth, created the conditions for the enemy to capture the territory of Crimea. Marshal Kulik, being an authorized representative of the State Defense

Committee, as Levchenko shows, instead of taking measures to defend the city of Kerch, his defeatist moods and actions contributed to the surrender of this strategically important city to the enemy. On this document, the resolution was preserved: "T-shchu Kulik. Please provide your explanations

in writing. I. Stalin. 27.I.42» Why was an explanation about the surrender of Kerch requested only two and a half months after our troops left the Kerch Peninsula? Here, obviously, another event associated with the name of Kulik played a role: on November 21, 1941, the Germans captured Rostov. Correspondence about the Rostov events

shows that the decision to deal with Kulik matured with Stalin in late November - early December. The surrender of the "gates to the Caucasus" became a significant addition to the surrender of Kerch, although only the Crimean events appeared at the trial of Kulik. And this is quite understandable. Indeed, already on November 29, units of the 56th Army recaptured Rostov from the enemy, and this offensive was being prepared under the direct supervision of Kulik. It was inconvenient to try Grigory Ivanovich for the surrender of the city, which was taken back

just a week later and with his active participation. In connection with the surrender of Rostov on December 1, 1941, Stalin sent a cipher message to the first secretary of the Rostov Regional Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks B.A. Dvinsky, where, in particular, he pointed out: "Now it can be considered proven that the Rostov military and party organizations conducted the defense of Rostov badly and criminally easily surrendered Rostov. The defensive line in front of Rostov was ceded to the enemy without any serious resistance. In Rostov itself, the necessary barriers were not made. Attics, roofs, upper floors of houses were not used to destroy the enemy with hand grenades, machine-gun and rifle fire. You did not organize any resistance of the workers in Rostov (Iosif Vissarionovich was still thinking in terms of the Civil War, not thinking about what untrained and poorly armed workers could do against Kleist tanks and inflict at least some damage to these tanks with rifle and machine-gun fire from the upper floors. - **B.S.**). All this must be corrected immediately so that the shameful surrender of Rostov does not happen again. We would also like to find out what role Kulik played in this whole story of the surrender of Rostov. How did he behave - did he

help the defense of Rostov or interfere? The tone of Stalin's message suggested to Dvinsky that Kulik was no longer in favor. After all, Joseph Vissarionovich directly hinted that the marshal could interfere with the defense of Rostov. But since Grigory Ivanovich still remained Deputy People's Commissar of Defense and authorized by the State Defense Committee, the Rostov secretary preferred to answer about him cautiously, without harsh and unambiguous definitions and formulations. Who knows how things will turn out. Suddenly, Stalin will return his favor to Kulik. And Dvinsky wrote this: "The city was surrounded on three sides, there were

armies terribly late, and we did not have a single person in reserve during the inner city defense. Threatened unhindered opening of the road to the other side.

The current success was successful, since the enemy was severely exhausted by the struggle for Rostov, and we had something to strike from the south. In Rostov itself they fought, and hard. There were also barriers set up at the direction of military experts, taking into account that field units would enter the city. Now they are considered insufficient. We carried out preparatory work among the workers, but all weapons (rifles, machine guns, etc.) were given to the field units. The workers who still remained in the city had nothing to equip. The communists and the best workers were organized in advance, even before the evacuation of enterprises, into a regiment of the people's militia, received training in advance and received mainly old weapons (about a thousand people). (As experience shows, the training of the people's militias during the Great Patriotic War was very conditional, and they were often armed with training rifles with a sharpened striker, which could only be used in hand-to-hand combat. - B.S.) . They fought honestly inside the city wherever they could.

New detachments of workers have nothing to equip. Whether I am right or not, I believe, from our experience, that a city can be defended mainly by a field army, because when the enemy is already on the outskirts or partly inside the city, everything, as experience has shown, is terribly disorganized (communications, light, transportation, etc.) etc.) and then it is difficult to knock out the enemy. And it is imperative to have reserves at hand, since thousands of surprises arise in the process of urban combat.

Marshal Kulik led the entire operation, for which we considered him called, considering him as an unconditional military authority. **I** think that he is a somewhat hectic person, he works randomly. In the future, if necessary, you should send another, calmer and more reasonable. Remezov and Melnikov (commander and member of the Military Council of the 56th Army. - **B.S.**) followed Kulik in everything without a dispute. Kulik's characterization here is rather

contradictory. On the one hand, "unconditional military authority" and "supervised the entire operation" (that is, both the defense of Rostov and the preparation of the subsequent counteroffensive). On the other hand, man

hectic and erratic, which would be better to replace. Dvinsky, of course, took into account that on November 28, on the very eve of the liberation of Rostov, Stalin recalled Kulik to Moscow. So, for some reason, the Supreme Commander did not want one of the first successful counteroffensives of the Red Army to be associated with the name of the marshal.

Immediately after Rostov, Kulik was sent to rectify the situation near Tikhvin. On November 8, 1941, German troops captured this city, trying to block the Ladoga "road of life" and finally close the encirclement around Leningrad. However, during the counteroffensive that began on November 19, divisions of the Leningrad and Volkhov fronts, after stubborn fighting on December 9, again captured Tikhvin, pushing the enemy back to their original positions. However, this success in the eyes of Stalin did not outweigh Kulik's guilt for the surrender of Kerch and Rostov. It is interesting that even later Soviet historians and memoirists preferred not to mention Kulik's role in the Tikhvin operation at all. Read the memoirs of K.A. Meretskov, who at that time commanded the 4th Army fighting near Tikhvin, Kulik was not there at all. Although it was after the arrival of Grigory Ivanovich that the offensive of the Soviet divisions accelerated and Tikhvin was finally taken. At the end of December, the marshal was recalled from

Tikhvin to Moscow. There the Kerch and Rostov showdowns were already in full swing.

In his explanations regarding the surrender of Kerch, dated January 30, 1942, Grigory Ivanovich stated: "When I arrived in the city of Kerch, got acquainted with the situation, personally traveled around the front, looked at the actions of my troops and the enemy, I came to the conclusion that to defend Kerch and landing with these troops in the current situation is impossible, since the dominant heights directly above the city from the south, southwest, west and northwest were already occupied by the enemy, while the city itself was not fortified. To take back these heights, since without mastering them the defense of the city and the pier is unthinkable, it was impossible for these troops, they were so demoralized that they were not able to defend themselves, and there could be no talk of an offensive by these troops. It was impossible to put them in order under the direct influence of the enemy, who was impudently advancing. It would take to decide

the task of holding the piers, the city and the bridgehead for a further counterattack on the Crimea, at least three fresh infantry divisions. I

made the right decision not to let the remnants of the army be finished off and in no case give up artillery and weapons to the enemy, to transfer the army to the Taman Peninsula in an organized manner and to fulfill your main task to prevent the enemy from seizing the Taman Peninsula and entering the North Caucasus. I completed this task. In fact, from that moment on, I was in charge of the remnants of the army and the organization of defense on the Taman Peninsula, since Levchenko was so limp that he could not carry out this rather serious work in a rather difficult situation. The army was transferred, weapons and artillery were saved, and the enemy failed to completely defeat the army. If some "strategists" believe that the holding of the city of Kerch with the harbor covers the enemy's movement to the North Caucasus, that is, to the Taman Peninsula, then they are deeply mistaken and do not understand the situation. When the enemy occupied the Kerch fortress, he could cross over to the Tuzlu Spit (to the Tuzla Spit. - **B.S.**) and occupy the southern spur of the Taman Peninsula, and this is tantamount to occupying the entire Taman Peninsula and encircling the city of Kerch. Therefore, with the forces that we had at our disposal, we were unable to solve two problems, that is, to keep Kerch with the harbor and tightly occupy the Taman Peninsula. Despite the fact that without your permission I took the 12th rifle brigade and one rifle battalion from the reserve regiment, these forces were only enough to take up defense on the Taman Peninsula.

The most important crime is committed by the commander, if he gives the troops an obviously impossible order, the troops are unable to fulfill it, they die themselves, and the order remains unfulfilled. As for my personal cowardice, I did not even know until now that I was a coward, although I was already fighting the sixth war in my life. I have one request for you, Comrade Stalin: second those who call me a coward. Let them stay with me for a few fights and see which of us is a coward.

I don't know why the army was brought to such a state in which I met it, but I believe that Levchenko could not lead the army, since he understood nothing at all in the land army. He represented

of himself as a limp political officer, talking a lot, but no one listened to him. His appointment as commander was a big mistake.

With regard to Comrade Batov, I have known him for more than 10 years, I personally observed him in battles in Spain, where he acted well, I observed him when he commanded the 13th Corps against the Finns. In the Finnish war, he also led well. He is a well-trained commander, combative, with great willpower. When I began to find out the reason why he did not take on the main role of command, I was told that Levchenko interfered and prevented him from commanding”;

In the post-war memoirs of N.G. Kuznetsov characterizes the actions of the “limp political officer” Levchenko on the Kerch Peninsula in a completely different way: “According to the decision of the Headquarters, it was G.I. Levchenko took measures to detain the enemy on the Kerch Peninsula. The superiority of the enemy in forces did not allow this to be done. But even retreating, the Soviet troops inflicted very tangible blows on the Nazis. From such blows there was a future success, and then a complete victory. G.I. Levchenko did everything in his power. The defense of Odessa, Nikolaev and Sevastopol is inextricably linked with his name. Everything is decorous and noble, so that the reader will never guess that Gordey Ivanovich was tried and demoted for the surrender of Kerch. By the way, in the subsequent Levchenko did not acquire the laurels of a naval commander. Commanding the Kronstadt naval base, he became famous only for the failed landing on Sommers Island in July 42, when the four times the strongest detachment of paratroopers could not cope with the German garrison of 60 people and suffered heavy losses. Kuznetsov even issued a special order on this occasion so that others could learn from the mistakes of Gordey Ivanovich. But Levchenko remained a people's commissar, and Nikolai Gerasimovich contributed to his return from disgrace in the 44th and wrote only good things about the vice admiral

And what about Pavel Ivanovich Batov, whom Kulik considered a good, strong-willed commander? Did he find kind words about Grigory Ivanovich in his memoirs? Nothing happened. Here is how Batov describes Kulik's actions in Kerch: “Marshal Kulik, a representative of the Headquarters, was on Taman. On the ninth, my CP arrived TT. Levchenko and Nikolaev, and soon, unexpectedly for everyone, a representative of the Headquarters. But a strange thing, instead of providing assistance (the provision of Kerch with ammunition largely depended on it), instead of

inspire confidence, comrade. Kulik came to scold. In a rude, insulting form, he demanded that Vice Admiral Levchenko answer why you are "criminally leaving Crimea." The conversation was interrupted by German machine gunners: they leaked onto Mount Mithridates, under which the command post was located, and began to throw grenades down. The officers who were at the command post with the guards went on a counterattack, and we put Kulik on a car and sent him to the port, from where he left for Taman.

After Kulik's departure, Vice-Admiral Levchenko seemed to have forgotten about the unpleasant meeting. He calmly discussed the situation at the front with me and Nikolaev, and said in conclusion that it was necessary to defend Kerch to the last opportunity. What I liked most about Levchenko was that he never for a moment lost confidence in our victory. This confidence came from a man who himself was barely on his feet from exhaustion. I confess that it was during the conversation in this heated to the limit situation that the authority of the Vice Admiral rose very high in my eyes. No matter how bitter our failures were, the conversation with Levchenko gave me new

strength. Vice Admiral did everything possible to defend Kerch. He assisted the ground troops with the forces of the Marine Corps, provided fire support from the ships. But the attacks of the enemy intensified every day. After three days of fighting, the Nazis pulled up a fresh division of the 30th Army Corps from the reserve (in fact, all divisions of this corps advanced on Sevastopol and did not participate in the battles for Kerch. - B.S.) . It became clear that we would not succeed in holding the city. Therefore, by order of the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command, the withdrawal of troops from Kerch to the Taman Peninsula began.

Cunning, oh, cunning Pavel Ivanovich! It is no coincidence that he forced Kulik to arrive in Kerch on November 9th. Then the telegram sent the next day to Levchenko and Batov, which spoke of the possible evacuation of Kerch, could be explained by the "bad influence" on the part of the marshal. In fact, Gordey Ivanovich at that moment was not thinking about how to defend Kerch to the last opportunity, but was trying to legitimize the spontaneous evacuation to Taman that had already begun. Kulik tried to

justify himself by bombarding Stalin with letters. On February 6, 1942, a GKO decree appeared on bringing him to

court for the surrender of Kerch. Shocked, Grigory Ivanovich wrote to Stalin on February 8: "I consider myself guilty that I violated the order of the Headquarters and surrendered the city of Kerch to the enemy without your permission. My entire growth has been under your personal guidance since 1918, which is why I believe that my guilt is a thousand times worse. Believe me, Comrade Stalin, that I did this not out of malice and not because I ignored your order, no, but because it seemed to me on the spot that I could not give a general battle on the Kerch Peninsula and sink the enemy in the strait, preventing him from entering the Taman Peninsula."

Having repented, Kulik tried to justify himself: "True, I report to you that the situation there was extremely difficult and rapidly changing, and, to my regret, when I arrived in Kerch, communication with Moscow did not work and we only got in touch a day after my decision was made. for departure. At that moment, there were 11,400 people in Kerch, of which no more than 2,500-3,000 bayonets were fighting, plus artillerymen, the rest were a rabble of specialists, rear soldiers, deserters, and more than 20,000 people had already been transferred to Taman, an uncontrollable mass that we subsequently caught and organized. I ask the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist

Party of the Soviet Union and personally you, comrade Stalin, to forgive me my crime, and I give my word of honor as a Bolshevik that I will never again violate the orders and instructions of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of the Soviet Union and personally yours, and I also ask you, comrade Stalin, to give me the opportunity to atone my gravest guilt before the party and personally before you, entrust me with

the most important combat mission in a combat situation - I will fulfill it. Stalin did not forgive and, as we will see later, never gave Kulik the opportunity to distinguish himself in order to make amends for his imaginary guilt in the surrender of Kerch. On February 10, USSR Prosecutor V.M. Bochkov drew up an indictment in the Kulik case. Now he, and not Levchenko, was responsible for the loss of the Kerch Peninsula. At the same time, it was alleged that the vice-admiral, as the documents of the General Staff testify, "objectively reported to the Headquarters about the situation in the troops." True, then Gordey Ivanovich was not rehabilitated, and he had to be a captain of the 1st rank for

another two years. On February 19, Kulik was removed from the membership of the Central Committee and removed from the post of Deputy People's Com

The USSR upheld the verdict of the court to demote Grigory Ivanovich to major general. The Politburo resolution also stated that "During his stay at the front, Kulik systematically drank, led a depraved lifestyle and, abusing the title of Marshal of the Soviet Union and deputy. People's Commissar of Defense, was engaged in self-supply and plunder of state property, wasting hundreds of thousands of rubles from state funds. Having received the draft resolution, on February 18 he sent a letter to Stalin, where he denied the charges. But the resolution was adopted in the absence of Kulik without any changes. The former marshal did not know about this. On February 21, Grigory Ivanovich sent his last letter to Stalin, where he tried to explain himself about Kerch and Rostov: "I am guilty of violating the order, but not of military duty in relation to the Motherland. Everything that was possible to do in those conditions and with the forces that I found in the city of Kerch, I did. All the forces that were capable of fighting fought a fierce battle in a very difficult situation with at least a threefold superiority of the enemy, and in tactically unfavorable conditions, since the enemy captured the commanding heights above the city and inflicted heavy ones with his aimed fire. loss to our troops.

We tried to take the main height dominating the city - our offensive was repulsed (we are undoubtedly talking about that counterattack on Mount Mithridates, which P.I. Batov describes. - B.S.). We could only hold out for the day, and I reported to Headquarters on 14.11.41 through the general on duty the situation that we could hold out for another day. I asked to report to Comrade Shaposhnikov and to you personally and said that I was waiting at the apparatus for an answer. I received an answer only on 16.11.41. I ask you to read the telegram, where Comrade Shaposhnikov indicated the plan for transporting equipment and artillery to Taman, and leaving rifle units on the eastern coast of the Kerch Peninsula. This directive actually authorized the surrender of the city of Kerch. It was impossible to leave rifle units on the eastern coast of the Kerch Peninsula, since we had already crossed (through the strait. - **B.S.**), and most importantly, that the main covering forces of the 2nd regiment of the 302nd division suffered losses in 4-3 days of battle and at 15–18 percent of them remained in one regiment, and in the second 25–30 percent of

we did not have. I asked the investigation and the court to interrogate the commanders who fought, I was refused. The trial took place on the basis of materials, directives of the Headquarters, testimony of Levchenko and punitive authorities. The draft states that by

my defeatist behavior in the city of Kerch and Rostov, I increased the defeatist mood of the army and demoralized it among the command. It is not right. No one has ever seen or heard a word of decadence from me. Let at least one person from these two armies say that I showed cowardice or alarmism. It's a complete fabrication from start to finish.

end.

With regard to the Rostov operation: I asked the prosecutor to look into this issue, since in the decision of the Defense Committee I am also accused of surrendering Rostov. I asked Comrade Bochkov to interrogate the Military Council of the 56th Army, commanders and commissars of divisions, he refused. Said there was no legal charge against me
can not.

Tov. Stalin! I earnestly ask you to analyze the Rostov operation, but without fail with the interrogation of the Military Council of the 56th Army, commanders and commissars of divisions. Then you will see who broke the Kleist group. This was done by the 56th Army, not by the Southern Front."

Grigory Ivanovich did not bypass the accusations of moral uncleanness:
"Regarding the accusation against me of drunkenness, a systematic and depraved lifestyle, this is a vile intrigue. When you called me in the city of Rostov on this issue, I asked you to investigate this provocation directed against me. In the city of Rostov, we all lived in a commune in the same apartment with the Military Council, adjutants and guards. Please interrogate these people. I was in Krasnodar for about 3 days, I lived in the dacha of the regional committee, I always had lunch and dinner with the secretary of the regional committee and the chairman of the regional executive committee. I also ask you to interrogate what I did there.

In Taman I lived for 6 days with a collective farmer, where the chairman of the Krasnodar Territory Executive Committee Comrade Tyulyaev was with me. I ask you to interrogate these persons in order to avoid a shameful provocative accusation."

Indeed, it is difficult to imagine that the marshal was engaged in debauchery in the presence of adjutants, guards and members of the Military

Council. And, obviously, he could get drunk only together with the same Dvinsky, Tyulyaev and the leadership of the 56th Army. But none of those who were with Kulik were charged with drunkenness and debauchery.

Grigory Ivanovich also tried to justify himself about accusations of self-supply and abuse of the marshal rank: "In Rostov we all lived together and ate from the same kitchen. Meals were organized by the quartermaster of the 56th army, I ask him to interrogate. In Krasnodar, the regional executive committee organized meals. In Taman, the head of the logistics of the Danube Flotilla organized meals, I ask them to interrogate what orders I gave. They fed me. I sent food, mainly fruit, to Sverdlovsk, they gave me in Krasnodar. Regarding the supply of my car: I asked to supply the regional executive committee of Krasnodar, and comrades sent me wine and fruit from Georgia. There have never been any of my abuses of excess of power in this regard.

We have already made sure that Kulik, like many other generals and marshals, sinned precisely with self-supply. But it seems that he was not a mediocre commander, a coward and a libertine. Only Stalin did not care at all about this circumstance. He had already chosen Grigory Ivanovich as a victim, deciding to attribute the Kerch failure to him. On March 2, 1942, by order of the Red Army, Stalin announced Kulik's demotion due to the unauthorized abandonment of Kerch and Rostov, when the marshal allegedly "behaved like a coward, frightened by the Germans", as well as for drunkenness, self-supply and "a depraved lifestyle." But even at the height of the battle for Rostov, the commander of the 56th Army, Remezov, reported to Shaposhnikov: "Grigory Ivanovich is behaving very badly, from our point of view, today his life has been repeatedly in the balance." And the secretary of the Rostov regional committee Dvinsky, already after Kulik's demolition, in a note to Stalin dated February 22, 1942, reported: after a stubborn battle near Taganrog, they have been spent, that the enemy is marching on Rostov, that it is impossible to delay the enemy before the city, we will give a city battle, and I, as secretary of the regional committee, must withdraw the unarmed population from the city so that they do not interfere with the battle and do not die in vain. And so it was done." Means,

Kulik himself did not hesitate to appear directly on the battlefield, looked into the eyes of death, although the marshal, probably, was allowed to be on the front line only in exceptional cases. Maybe Grigory Ivanovich decided that at that time near Rostov there was this exceptional case. I understood that for the surrender of Rostov, Stalin would not pat on the head. And, I want to emphasize once again, Kulik took care of the evacuation of the civilian population so that they would not die in the upcoming

street battles. It cannot be said that Grigory Ivanovich recklessly risked his own life. He left the encirclement in Belarus in disguise, avoiding meetings with the Germans. I spent only three hours in the doomed Kerch, realizing that there was nothing to do there. And near Rostov, in the end, he managed not only to withdraw the 56th Army from the city without heavy losses, but also to develop a plan for a counteroffensive, which ended in complete success after the departure of the marshal. No, it seems to me more and more that Kulik was by no means an incompetent commander! But even this success, Stalin, in an order dated March 2, 1942, managed to blame Grigory Ivanovich: "Further military events on the Southern and Crimean fronts, when, as a result of skillful and decisive actions of our troops, Rostov and Kerch were soon clearly proved that there was a full opportunity to defend these cities and not surrender them to the enemy. Good logic. Since Kerch and Rostov were captured again, it means that it was possible to keep them earlier without difficulty. As if the situation had not changed in these few weeks, as if it were not necessary to organize a special landing operation for the liberation of Kerch involving the forces of two fresh armies, as if Kleist's forces near Rostov had not been weakened by the end of November, and Remezov's army had not received reinforcements! To finish talking about

the events in Kerch and Rostov, we will have to go straight to 1957, when Kulik was fully rehabilitated and posthumously restored to the ranks of Marshal and Hero of the Soviet Union. In a note dated January 4, 1957, Deputy Minister of Defense I.S. Konev and Prosecutor General of the USSR R.A. Rudenko made the following conclusion: "Based on the materials of the study of the case and operational documents related to the hostilities in the Kerch direction, the General Staff came to

conclusion that by November 11-15, 1941, the enemy forces on this front were several times superior in numbers to our troops (indeed, given that the Germans had three more or less full-blooded divisions, and by November 11 there were 11 Soviet troops in Kerch 5 thousand people, it turns out that the enemy had a threefold superiority, and even if Grigory Ivanovich had arrived in Kerch not on the 12th, but on the 11th, he would not have been able to change anything. - B.S.) and that in the **current** conditions the command of the troops of the Kerch direction, as well as the former Marshal of the Soviet Union Kulik, with cash and, moreover, weakened forces and means, could not hold the city of Kerch and change the course of hostilities in our favor. Thus, for leaving the city of Kerch, Kulik T.I. was wrongfully convicted." Grigory Ivanovich remained in reserve until the

spring of 1943. In March, he had a conversation with G.K. Zhukov. Georgy Konstantinovich promised to personally talk about him with Stalin and achieve his appointment as commander of the army. Such a conversation took place and had an effect. In April, Grigory Ivanovich was promoted to lieutenant general and appointed commander of the 24th Army of the Voronezh Front. Zhukov took care of strengthening the army, soon renamed the 4th Guards, with fresh divisions and artillery. Kulik's army participated in the attack on Kharkov and in the disruption of the German counterattack near Akhtyrka. Zhukov petitioned for Kulik to be promoted to colonel general and to be awarded the title of Hero of the Soviet Union. However, Grigory Ivanovich had a conflict with N.S., a member of the Military Council of the Voronezh Front. Khrushchev. In September 43, Nikita Sergeevich achieved the removal of Kulik from his post "for lack of coordination with the front commander." On this, the military career of the former marshal ended. In January 1944, Kulik was appointed deputy head of the Main Directorate for the Formation and Staffing of Troops. Grigory Ivanovich remained in this clerical position until the spring of 1945, when new misfortunes fell upon him. On April 12, Kulik was removed from his post "for inactivity." Then he was demoted to major general and expelled from the party.

The true cause of the new disgrace was, of course, not inactivity. On the contrary, Grigory Ivanovich worked very

actively, constantly wandered on business trips to the fronts. And often at the same time he carried on harmful conversations, about which the vigilant special officers did not forget to report where they should be. For example, during one of the first business trips to Roslavl at the beginning of the 44th, Kulik spoke to his envoy, Colonel I.G. Paegle in connection with the defeat suffered by the Soviet troops near Orsha and Vitebsk in the battle with Field Marshal Ernst Busch's Army Group Center: "Our High Command has one thing in mind:" Only forward! Technicians with a gulkin nose, no ammunition was delivered, but in Moscow the mouth got bogged down on one note:

"Attack, forward!" With us, it happens that at first they will put all the infantry, and then the offensive begins. Grigory Ivanovich also remembered how, even before the war, the chairman of the State Planning Commission, N.A.

Voznesensky submitted a draft resolution for discussion by the government, according to which the size of a collective farmer's personal plot was determined by the number of workdays worked out: "I objected, because the purpose of this project is to completely deprive the collective farmer of land, so that he can work in the common field from dawn to dusk. Where did Voznesensky lead? As if our land, as in Jerusalem, is short. And we have it - I don't want to take it. She asks for her own hands. We are all afraid that an extra penny will fall into someone's pocket. How much land, and everything is rationed, rati

On April 18, 1945, Kulik was summoned to the Party Control Committee, where he was accused of "conducting conversations with individuals unworthy of a party member, consisting in praising the officers of the tsarist army, poor political education of Soviet officers, and incorrect placement of senior army personnel." The reason for the new case was the statements of generals I.E. Petrov and G.F. Zakharov, respectively, from 10 and. April 17, written at the suggestion of the head of the military counterintelligence "Smersh" V.S. Abakumov. Grigory Ivanovich, in turn, did not believe that conversations with the generals contained any kind of crime, and in his statement dated April 23, he demanded "to put me in touch with Petrov and Zakharov and find out for sure that we were not engaged in any anti-Party affairs." But no one listened to him, as well as to arrange face-to-face confrontations between the generals. In addition, Colonel General I.V. Smorodinov, head of the Glavupraform, and Major General Kolesnikov, a member of the Military Council of the Directorate, sent a letter to the Minister of the Armed Forces N.A. Bulganin a letter where they accused

Kulik in "moral uncleanness and junk, loss of taste and interest in work."
Grigory Ivanovich

expected the worst. But Stalin decided to play cat and mouse with his old friend a little more. In July 1945, Kulik was appointed to the last post in his life - deputy commander of the Volga Military District. The district was commanded by Colonel-General Hero of the Soviet Union V.N. Gordov. The Volga District, where there were few troops and the borders far, was traditionally considered a place of honorable exile for disgraced military leaders. Sometimes staying there turned into a short stop on the way to the Lubyanka cellars. That is exactly what happened, as we remember, with Tukhachevsky. Gordoye, Kulik, and Chief of Staff of the District, Major General F.T. Rybalchenko repeated his sad fate. All three were unrestrained in their language. In May-June 1946, two commissions of the Ministry of the Armed Forces checked the state of combat and political training in the troops of the Volga District and made an unsatisfactory assessment. Grigory Ivanovich was also charged with duck hunting, which was rather unusual: the former marshal personally shot ducks from a machine gun mounted on a U-2 aircraft. In June 1946, Gordov, Kulik and Rybalchenko were transferred to the reserve. The generals considered their dismissal unfair, and in private conversations harsh judgments were made about Minister Bulganin, army political workers, and even the Generalissimo himself, not suspecting that Abakumov's people were recording these conversations on tape. In January 1947, all three were arrested. Later, at the trial, Kulik admitted: "Being demoted for the surrender of Kerch, instead of experiencing it as a Bolshevik, I became embittered. My anger was further strengthened by the fact that my old comrades began to play pranks on me. At that time I harbored a grudge against the party and the government.

My second fault is that when I was in Germany preparing a military operation (obviously, we are talking about the last offensive against Berlin. - B.S.), Zhukov came to me, who, after inspecting the positions, invited me to dinner. During dinner, a conversation began about the methods of warfare, and Timoshenko again began to play me, saying that all of us old men had been removed from command and the youth had gone into action. That the war now is not in quality, but in quantity. I agreed with this statement by Tymoshenko,

shared his statements, took part in the criticism of offended persons of the leadership of the High Command. Then my

fault lies in the fact that when Zhukov was removed, I, having met with him, expressed my sympathy to him. After I was removed from the command of the army for the second time, I got an appointment with Stalin, where he told me that I was tired of fighting and therefore I needed to take the Glavupraform. This offended me greatly, since I

wanted to fight.

One day after that, my old adjutant Heilo, who was close to me, came to me, since I fought with him in the Civil War, and we were married to sisters. During the conversation, I expressed my anger to him that we old people are being offended and not allowed to fight, and in this conversation I expressed my opinion that the war is going on at the expense of the peasants and that the collective farms will not be restored after the war, since the entire economy of the collective farms has been destroyed. Apparently, I will have to build myself a house and live to old age, doing nothing.

Many years later, Andrei Ivanovich Kheilo, who returned from the camps, in a conversation with the writer Vladimir Vasilievich Karpov, recalled how he was knocked out of testimony about the conspiratorial activities of Kulik, Gordov and Rybalchenko: "Here they beat me on the nails. They put a hand on the table and on the nails. First left, then right. And the hand is held so as not to withdraw. And then toenails. Sadists know where it hurts the most. And, of course, rubber hoses and so on, this is already on the back, on the kidneys. Placed in a cell. They took off my clothes. Cold, damp, dark. And then I was still in a standing cell, in boxing. In the end, I didn't think anything anymore, I wanted one thing - to stop these torments. Heilo's testimony about allegedly numerous anti-Soviet conversations between the three

disgraced generals Kulik rejected at the trial. Grigory Ivanovich insisted that only once had he heard something anti-Soviet from Gordov: "Gordoye made an angry statement that supposedly under the tsar they plowed with plow and horses, but under Soviet power they plow in public." Kulik recalled that Vasily Nikolaevich once walked about Joseph Vissarionovich: "Stalin provides only himself, but does not provide us." But all these statements did not pull on an anti-government conspiracy. Kulik admitted and conversations with Paegle, as well as his guilt in the fact that, "being in

Smolensk region, I once went into the house of a teacher who lived very poorly and had five children, I asked her a question - why does she have such a small garden at a time when there is a lot of free uncultivated land around? The teacher answered me that they didn't give her more land, since she was equated with the category of an employee, and in the presence of Paegle I expressed my indignation in an embittered form at the existing order for cultivating the land in our country. The former marshal also confessed in overly frank conversations with Petrov and Zakharov: "In early 1945, at the apartment of General of the Army Petrov, who had General Zakharov (small), while drinking, the conversation turned that Petrov once sent Voroshilov a wagon of furniture and a horse, but Despite this, Petrov was filmed twice and other people were appointed instead of him. We then talked about the honor of the uniform and the position we occupied. From Petrov, I, along with Zakharov, went to his apartment, and while drinking, I raised a toast to Zhukov. Here we also started talking about the appointment of Bulganin as the first deputy of the Commander-in-Chief. We expressed our opinion that the Commander-in-Chief needed a commissar and, apparently, the appointment of Bulganin was

connected with this. The presiding lieutenant-general of justice, Cheptsov, read out Kulik's testimony given during the preliminary investigation: "Petrov expressed dissatisfaction with his removal from the post of commander of the 4th Ukrainian Front. As Petrov said, the Headquarters worked for him - the honored general - because he allowed himself to take furniture and other property out of Romania for personal use. Under the tsarist regime, according to Petrov, such a charge would not have been brought

against the general. Soon Zakharov, who lived on the floor below, invited us to move into his apartment. We agreed. After talking, I began to complain about the unfair, in my opinion, Stalin's attitude towards me. In this connection, I stated that the government is expelling the best commanding cadres from the Red Army and replacing them with political workers who are not versed in military affairs. Of the main military workers, only one Zhukov remained in the leadership of the army, but he was also "rejected" by appointing Bulganin, who knew nothing about the affairs of the army, as the first deputy people's commissar of defense. I raised a toast to Zhukov and offered to group around him."

Grigory Ivanovich categorically denied that he proposed to group (it already looked like a conspiracy) and that he was indignant at political workers who knew nothing about military science. He said that the testimony "was given involuntarily" (probably using the same methods as in relation to Haylo). Kulik only admitted that he had made a toast to Zhukov, because he believed that "no one better than Zhukov can be found for the post of First Deputy People's Commissar of Defense." He honestly told the court: "I thought that Zhukov was 'rejected' by the people who surround Stalin, and specifically I thought that Beria did it. This question about my statement regarding Zhukov was examined by the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks, Shkiryatov, and for this I was expelled from the party. I had a good relationship with Zhukov. I presented him for promotion during the military operation at Khalkhin Gol. Knowing well Zhukov and his character, I assumed that he could have allowed some harshness in a conversation with Stalin, for which he was removed. Of course, I am to blame for allowing such criticism, this is my fault.

My second conversation with Zhukov took place at the time when I was Glavupraform. I also expressed my regret to Zhukov that he was not appointed First Deputy People's Commissar of Defense, but Bulganin. I felt that Zhukov was very worried about this circumstance.

Kulik also confirmed several of Gordov's anti-Soviet statements - about the existence of a "government bunch of tyrants" and "hell knows, they brought the country to a state of poverty." And in the last word, Grigory Ivanovich repented, although, apparently, he felt that this would no longer save him: "I was embittered against the Soviet government and the party, which I could not survive as a Bolshevik, and this brought me to the dock. I made anti-Soviet statements, which I repent of, but I ask you to understand that I was not an enemy of the Soviet government and did not betray my Motherland. Worked honestly all the time. I repent and ask the court to believe that I am not an enemy in my soul, I accidentally fell into this swamp, which dragged me in, and I could not get out of it. I turned out to be politically short-sighted and did not report on the actions of Gordov and Rybalchenko in a timely manner.

The court did not believe, and his sentence was a foregone conclusion. For treason to the Motherland, for the fact that, "being an active enemy of Soviet power, he grouped with hostile elements, was a supporter of the restoration of capitalism in the USSR and, together with his accomplices Gordov and

Rybalchenko expressed threats against the leaders of the CPSU (b) and the Soviet government "On August 24, 1950, former Marshal of the Soviet Union Grigory Ivanovich Kulik was sentenced to death by the Military Collegium of the Supreme Court of the USSR. On the night of August 24-25, the sentence was carried out. It remains to add that, at the request of his widow Olga Mikhailovskaya, who also visited the camps, Kulik was completely rehabilitated, reinstated in the rank of marshal by decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR of September 28, 1957. What led Kulik to death? I think there are two things.

Grigory Ivanovich was one of the few Soviet

military leaders who tried to fight "not in quantity", to spare soldiers' lives and not throw them into hopeless attacks. There was a certain rational grain in his proposals to use tanks mainly for direct support of the infantry. Yes, and horse-drawn artillery in the early years of the war, when there were no Studebakers delivered under Lend-Lease, was the only real alternative for the Red Army. Soviet troops throughout the war were inferior to the Wehrmacht in terms of combat training and education of fighters and commanders. Under these conditions, it would be more rational for them to have a strategy of attrition rather than crushing, simpler defensive rather than offensive actions, the use of tanks not in large masses, which were very difficult to control on the march and in battle, but in small groups to directly support the shooters. Such a strategy and tactics would not only have reduced Soviet losses, but perhaps would have made it possible to win the war more quickly. However, Stalin and his marshals firmly believed in the strategy of crushing, which they carried out, regardless of losses, trying to literally fill the enemy with the corpses of the Red Army. Kulik here looked like a "black sheep" and inevitably had to be thrown down from the heights to which he ascended by 1940.

The last fall of the demoted marshal in the spring of 1945 was connected with the campaign that had begun against Marshal Zhukov. The proximity of Kulik and Zhukov was well known, and it is no coincidence that the removal of Grigory Ivanovich from the post of deputy commander of the Volga District coincided with the removal of Georgy Konstantinovich from the post of commander-in-chief of the Ground Forces and his exile to a secondary

Odessa district. Stalin feared that Zhukov might gather dissatisfied and offended generals around him, and he purged both the immediate Zhukovsky entourage and those military leaders who were clearly sympathetic to Georgy Konstantinovich. Among the latter was Kulik, who had long since fallen out of favor with the leader. And Iosif Vissarionovich did not spare his "old friend."

LAVRENTY BERIA

Executioner, Technocrat, Reformer

Lavrenty Pavlovich Beria was the last of the executed marshals. And, thanks to his position, he remained in the people's memory as the most odious of them. Unlike other comrades in misfortune, which are discussed in this book, Lavrenty Pavlovich almost did not act as a commander. The only exception is his participation in the battle for the Caucasus in 1942-1943 as a representative of the Stavka. But the Order of Suvorov of the 1st degree, the highest commander's award, Beria received in 1944 not for this, but for "exemplary performance of a special task of the government" - the organization of the deportation of Chechens, Ingush, Karachays, Crimean Tatars and other peoples of the North Caucasus and Crimea. On March 29

(and according to the old style - March 17), 1899, in the mountain village of Merkheuli in Abkhazia, not far from Sukhumi, the son Lavrenty was born in the family of Pavel Beria and Marta Jakeli. My father was a peasant, a native of Mingrelia, a Georgian region bordering on Abkhazia. However, Pavle was involved in the riots, and he had to move to Merheuli. Although the village was located in Abkhazia, only Mingrelians lived there (now, after the Georgian-Abkhazian war of the 1990s, they no longer live). This is a special ethnic group of Georgians, which the Georgians proper treat with condescension. Martha was also a Mingrelian, but from the nobility - she was a distant relative of the princes of Dadiani, the former feudal rulers of Mingrelia. However, the Jakely family had long since gone bankrupt, and Martha was as poor as her husband. Pavle Beria was a peasant, but never got out of poverty. Marta Jakely worked as a sewer, and this gradually became the main livelihood for their family. Martha later told Sergo's grandson that he conquered her, widowed early, Pavle with courage and beauty. Three children were soon added to the daughter and son from the first marriage. But the fate of all three was unfortunate. The eldest son died of smallpox at the age of two. Daughter Anna, after an illness, forever remained deaf and mute. The parents pinned all their hopes on their second son, Lawrence. To educate him

my father even sold half of his house. The future chief of the NKVD was assigned to the Sukhum real school. At the age of 15, Lavrenty graduated with honors. In order for him to enter the Baku Mechanical and Construction Technical School, his father had to sell the second half of the house and move to a squalid hut. The boy was talented, and Pavle hoped that his son would go far in life. After all, Lavrenty very early discovered the ability to draw and interest in architecture. But he did not have the opportunity to become an architect. Back in October 1915, as Beria noted in his autobiography, written on October 27, 1923, he organized an illegal Marxist circle with a group of students from the Baku Technical School, which existed until the February Revolution. In March, on the 17th, Beria and several comrades organized a Bolshevik cell at the school. In June 1917, he was sent to the Romanian front as a trainee technician at the army hydraulic engineering school. After the collapse of the front, Lavrenty returned to Baku in autumn, where in 1919 he graduated from a technical school. In his autobiography, he wrote: "Starting from 1917, in Transcaucasia, I am involved in the general channel of party-Soviet work, which throws me from place to place, from the conditions of the legal existence of the party (in 1918 in Baku) to illegal (19 and 20 years) and is interrupted by my departure to Georgia.

In 1919, on the instructions of the underground communist party of Azerbaijan, Beria entered the service in the counterintelligence of the Musavat government. Later, at the trial of 1953, this fact was regarded as a betrayal. However, an explanatory note by the old Bolshevik I.P. has been preserved in the archive. Pavlunovsky, who in 1919-1920 was the deputy head of the Special Department of the Cheka, in 1926-1932 - the chairman of the Transcaucasian GPU, and from the 32nd year - the deputy people's commissar of heavy industry Sergo Ordzhonikidze. It is dated June 25, 1937 and addressed to Stalin personally. Pavlunovsky wrote that before he was appointed to work in Transcaucasia, he had a conversation with Dzerzhinsky: "T. Dzerzhinsky informed me that one of my assistants in Transcaucasia, comrade Beria, worked with the Musavatists in the Musavatist counterintelligence. Let this circumstance not in any way confuse me or put me on guard against comrade Beria, since comrade Beria worked in counterintelligence with the knowledge of the responsible comrades. Transcaucasians and what do he, Dzerzhinsky and Comrade

Ordzhonikidze". In Tiflis, Ordzhonikidze confirmed to Pavlunovsky that Beria worked in the Musavatist counterintelligence on behalf of the party, and this was known not only to him, Ordzhonikidze, but also to Kirov, Mikoyan and the then secretary of the Caucasian Bureau of the party A.M. Nazarethyan. Pavlunovsky concluded his note with the following words: "About two years ago, Comrade Sergo once told me in a conversation: you know that right-wing deviators and other riffraff are trying to use the fact that he worked in the Musavatist counterintelligence in the fight against Beria, but nothing will come of it. I asked Sergo if Comrade Stalin knew about this. Comrade Sergo Ordzhonikidze replied that Comrade Stalin knew about this and that he had told Comrade Stalin about it. In his

note, Pavlunovsky also reported on Ordzhonikidze's attitude towards Beria: "During the two years of work in the Transcaucasus, Comrade Ordzhonikidze told me several times that he highly appreciated Comrade Beria as a growing worker, that Comrade Beria would develop into a big worker and that such a characterization of comrade Beria, he, Sergo, reported to comrade Stalin. Interestingly, this note did not affect the fate of Pavlunovsky himself. Stalin methodically destroyed people from Ordzhonikidze's entourage. At the end of June, literally a couple of days after the submission of a note about Beria, Pavlunovsky was withdrawn from the list of candidates for membership in the Central Committee at the plenum, expelled from the party, soon arrested and shot on October 30, 1937. Obviously, he did not have any motives to distort the biography of Lavrenty Pavlovich or embellish Ordzhonikidze's attitude towards him. Stalin, despite the conflict with Sergo and the latter's suicide, agreed with his characterization of Beria's business qualities. Iosif Vissarionovich always appreciated Ordzhonikidze as an experienced business executive and took the recommendation given by Beria very seriously. Moreover, Mikoyan also spoke well of Lavrenty Pavlovich. Two months after Pavlunovsky's note, Beria was summoned to Moscow and appointed Yezhov's deputy.

Beria himself never concealed the fact of his service in the Musavat counterintelligence. In particular, in the autobiography of 1923 one can read: "In the autumn of the same 1919, from the Gummet party, I enter the counterintelligence service, where I work together with Comrade Musevi. Around March 1920, after the murder of a comrade

Musevi, I leave work in counterintelligence and work for a short time in the Baku customs." From the context of this message, it becomes clear that Beria worked in counterintelligence as a secret Bolshevik agent, and was forced to hastily leave the service in counterintelligence after the exposure and death of his accomplice.

In 1920, Lavrenty Pavlovich was sent to work illegally in Georgia, where the Menshevik government was in power. Beria went there on false documents in the name of Lakerbaya. Sh. Berishvili, a Georgian emigrant who was arrested after the Second World War and lived in Paris, during the investigation in 1953 testified: in the Tbilisi newspaper Kommunist (and we subscribed to the newspaper) about the appointment of Beria to some position, then Ramishvili remembered in my presence the arrest of Beria in 1920 by the Menshevik government. Ramishvili said that Beria was arrested by the head of the Meki Kedia special detachment in 1920, when Beria came to Georgia from Baku on some assignment from the Bolsheviks. Ramishvili then told me that Beria, after his arrest, told him everything about his assignments and connections. I was surprised, and Ramishvili told me to remind him of this when Kedia Meki came to him. The latter came to visit us often. When Meki Kedia came to us, we asked him about the arrest of Beria in 1920 and how Beria behaved during interrogations. Kedia confirmed that Beria cried after his arrest and

betrayed everyone, after which he was released. Berishvili's testimony seems to be confirmed by the cousin of Lavrenty Pavlovich Gerasim Beria. Lavrenty stayed at his apartment in 1920, when he arrived in Tiflis.

Gerasim told the investigators that he found his brother in prison under his real name, and not under the fictitious Lakerbaya. He also confirmed that after the arrest of Lavrenty, a special detachment had searched his apartment.

I wonder what Lavrenty Pavlovich himself wrote about this episode? In the autobiography of 1923, the stay in Georgia in 1920 is described as follows: "From the very first days after the April coup in Azerbaijan (as the communists called the occupation of

Soviet army. - **B.S.**) by the regional committee of the Communist Party of the Bolsheviks from the registrar (registration, that is, intelligence department. - **B.S.**) of the Caucasian Front under the Revolutionary Military Council of the 11th Army, I am sent to Georgia for underground work abroad as an authorized representative. In Tiflis, I contact the regional committee in the person of Comrade. Hmayak Nazaretyan, spreading a network of residents in Georgia and Armenia, establishing contact with the headquarters of the Georgian army and guards, regularly sending couriers to the registry office in Baku. In Tiflis, I was arrested along with the Central Committee of Georgia, but according to the negotiations between G. Sturua and Noah Zhordania (the head of the Georgian government. - **B.S.**), everyone

was released with a proposal to leave Georgia within 3 days. Further, Beria said that he then managed to stay in Georgia and, under the fictitious surname Lakerbaya, enter the service of the RSFSR representative office, which was headed by Kirov. On May 20, Beria went to Baku for instructions in connection with the conclusion of a peace treaty between Russia and Georgia (the Bolsheviks observed it for only a few months), but on the way back he was arrested. Kirov failed to rescue Beria, and Lavrenty Pavlovich was sent to the Kutaisi prison, which was distinguished by a harsh regime. He spent over two months there. In August, as a result of a hunger strike of political prisoners, Beria and other imprisoned Bolsheviks were released and in August 1920 they were deported to Baku. There, Lavrenty Pavlovich was immediately appointed manager of the affairs of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Azerbaijan. It is unlikely that he would have been entrusted with such a responsible post if there had been information about his unworthy

I note that Gerasim Beria probably had in mind the first arrest of his brother, when he was actually kept in the Tiflis prison under his real name. In the Kutaisi prison, Lavrenty Pavlovich was under the name Lakerbaya and was never identified by the Georgian authorities. The suggestion of the investigators in 1953 that Beria was released from prison because he betrayed the network of Soviet agents to the Georgian counterintelligence is hardly substantiated. After all, the first time he was arrested along with a large group of members of the Central Committee of the Georgian Communist Party, but was quickly released thanks to the efforts of G.F. Sturua, who represented the Soviet side in Georgia. The second time Lavrenty Pavlovich was taken when he had not yet managed to get

to Tiflis, and in the Kutaisi prison, his brother could not visit him. Obviously, Shalva Berishvili, who was already imprisoned, was ready to give the necessary testimony against Beria to the investigators and, voluntarily or unwittingly, combined the two arrests of the future NKVD chief into one.

In addition, the question arises why the Georgian emigrants did not subsequently use the compromising material that they had against Beria? According to Berishvili, Lavrenty Pavlovich betrayed all his agents, and this fact could put an end to his Chekist and party career. However, the Georgian Mensheviks made no attempt to blackmail the powerful head of the Transcaucasian Chekists, and later the head of the Transcaucasian party organization. But they could at least in order to alleviate the fate of their arrested comrades. But even a very biased investigation in 1953 failed to establish any facts of this kind. Isn't it more logical to assume that the former chief of the Georgian Ministry of Internal Affairs Noah Ramishvili had nothing against Beria?

By the way, I want to draw the attention of readers to the fact that Menshevik Georgia was still a democratic state, and it was possible to condemn a person even to imprisonment, and even more so to death, only if there was strong evidence against him. Georgian counterintelligence probably did not have such evidence against Beria. In addition, the imaginary Lakerbaia was, after all, an employee of the Soviet diplomatic mission, and a fragile, but peace was maintained with Soviet Russia at that time. This circumstance, as well as the hunger strike of political prisoners, which caused a great public outcry, most likely explains the release of Lavrenty Pavlovich from the Kutaisi prison. About the participation of Lavrenty Pavlovich himself in

the famous hunger strike, evidence that was not too flattering for him has been preserved. In the description given to Beria in the 20s by the commission of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Georgia, it was noted: "In prison, he did not obey the decisions of the party organization and showed cowardice. For example: he did not take part during the announcement of the hunger strike of the communists. But it is impossible to unconditionally believe this statement. We do not know what intrigues and struggle for power in the bowels of the Georgian GPU resulted in the above characterization, where Beria was also accused of deviations tow

leftism, bureaucracy and careerism and it was recognized as impossible to use it in more responsible work.

Earlier, Lavrenty Pavlovich received an extremely excellent reference in Baku. This was preceded by the following events, described in the autobiography: "I remain in this position (manager of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Azerbaijan. - **B.S.**) until October 1920, after which I was appointed by the Central Committee as executive secretary of the Extraordinary Commission for the expropriation of the bourgeoisie and the improvement of the living conditions of workers . I and Comrade Sarkis (Chairman of the Commission) carried out this work in a shock order until the liquidation of the Commission (February 1921). With the end of my work in the Commission, I manage to persuade the Central Committee to give me the opportunity to continue my education at the institute, where by that time I was a student (from the day it was opened in 1920). According to my requests, the Central Committee sends me to the institute, giving me a scholarship through the BakSoviet. However, not even two weeks pass before the Central Committee sends a demand to the Caucasus Bureau to second me to work in Tiflis, by its decree appoints me to AzCheka as deputy head of the secret operations department (April 1921) and soon - head of the secret operations department - deputy chairman of the AzCheka " . In 1923, the secretary of the Central Committee of the Azerbaijan Communist Party, Ruhulla Akhundov, issued Beria a certificate of characterization: "The certificate was given to a responsible party worker, comrade. Beria L.P. in the fact that he possesses outstanding abilities, manifested in various apparatuses of the state mechanism. Working as the manager of the Central Committee of the Azerbaijan Communist Party, the Extraordinary Commissioner of the Register of the Caucasian Front under the Revolutionary Military Council of the 11th Army and the Executive Secretary of the Extraordinary Commission for the Expropriation of the Bourgeoisie and the Improvement of the Life of the Workers, he, with his inherent energy, perseverance, carried out all the tasks assigned by the party, giving brilliant results in his work. versatile activity, which should be noted as the best, valuable, tireless worker, so necessary at the present moment in Soviet construction. The author of the characterization was arrested and shot in 1938, when Beria was at the head of the Communists of Georgia. Lavrenty Pavlovich could not or c

An equally flattering description was given to Beria in 1924 by the first secretary of the Transcaucasian regional committee of the party A.F. Myasnikov: "Beria is an intellectual. He declared himself in Baku as a capable security officer in the post of deputy chairman of the Cheka of Azerbaijan and head of the secret operative (head of the secret operative unit. - **B.S.**) of the Georgian Cheka. In the Azerbaijan Cheka, Beria worked tirelessly. He proudly noted in his autobiography that he actively participated in the defeat of the Muslim organization "Ittikhat" and the liquidation

of the Transcaucasian organization of the right SRs. For this last operation, on February 6, 1923, Lavrenty Pavlovich was noted by a special order of the collegium of the Cheka: "For the energetic and skillful liquidation of the Transcaucasian organization of the Social Revolutionary Party, the head of the secret operational unit of the Baku Provincial Department, comrade. Beria and the head of the secret department, comrade. Yossem are awarded with a weapon - a Browning revolver with inscriptions about what to put on their track records. In addition, on September 12, 1922, the Council of People's Commissars of Azerbaijan noted the merits of Beria with a letter of commendation.

In Georgia, where from the autumn of the 22nd Lavrenty Pavlovich headed the secret operational unit and was the deputy head of the local Cheka, he also showed himself well. In his autobiography, Beria noted: "Taking into account the seriousness of the work and the large object, I give all my knowledge and time to such, as a result, in a relatively short time, it is possible to achieve serious results that affect all branches of work: such is the elimination of banditry, which had assumed grandiose proportions. in Georgia, and the destruction of the Menshevik organization and of the anti-Soviet parties in general, in spite of the extreme legality. The results of the work achieved were noted by the Central Committee and the CEC of Georgia in the form of awarding me with the Order of the Red Banner. Beria's detective talent was especially pronounced during the suppression of the Menshevik uprising in January 1924. Here is what the son of Lavrenty Pavlovich Sergo tells about this from the words of his father: "In 1924, the father, deputy head of the Georgian Cheka, learns, and in advance, that a Menshevik uprising is being prepared. Given the scale of future performances, the father proposes to prevent bloodshed by any political measures. Ordzhonikidze

(after whom Sergo Lavrentievich was named. - **B.S.**), in turn, transmits his information to Moscow. The situation is alarming: intelligence knows for certain that a complete plan for the uprising has been developed, detachments are being prepared, and arsenals are being created. Actions will flare up all over the republic, and even if they do not really have the character of a nationwide uprising, it will look exactly like that.

Father understood that this adventure was doomed from the very beginning to failure, to great loss of life. Vigorous measures were needed to prevent bloodshed. And then he suggested taking such a step - to leak the information received. His proposal boiled down to ensuring that the Menshevik leaders themselves learned from reliable sources: the Georgian Cheka has full information about the impending uprising, and therefore it is pointless to hope for success. Ordzhonikidze, apparently, having received the consent of Moscow, did not mind: in that difficult situation, this was the only right decision. But the Mensheviks did not believe this information and regarded it only as a provocation. One of the leaders of the Menshevik movement, the head of the national guard Dzhugeli, was

sent to Georgia. His father learned about his transfer in advance from his scouts and, of course, took action: Valiko Dzhugeli was taken under surveillance from the moment he crossed the border. But just under observation - they were in no hurry to arrest one of the influential leaders of the Mensheviks. The very stay of Dzhugeli in Georgia was decided to be used for business. Through his own channels, his father warned Dzhugeli that his border crossing was not a secret for the Georgian Cheka, and he was given the opportunity to see for himself that the uprising was doomed to failure. Unfortunately, this information was also regarded as a provocation by the Chekists. Dzhugeli decided that the

GruzChK was simply afraid of mass demonstrations in the republic (as it was in many respects. - **B.S.**) and was unable to prevent them, therefore, it was trying by any means to convince the Menshevik leadership of the opposite. Dzhugeli was nevertheless arrested, but due to an unfortunate accident - he was recognized

on the street by one of his old acquaintances - he was officially detained. Already in prison, Dzhugeli got acquainted with the materials

which the GruzChK intelligence had, and he wrote a letter in which he urged his comrades-in-arms to refuse to speak. Neither abroad, nor in Georgia itself, they listened to him. Nevertheless, the Mensheviks organized the uprising, but, as expected, the army crushed it, and the people suffered senseless sacrifices, which could well have been avoided. If Ordzhonikidze had intervened, the bloodshed could still have been prevented, because in the very first hours all the leaders of the uprising were arrested, the arms depots were seized. In fact, the army smashed unruly and unarmed people.” It would seem that it is beneficial for the

son to present his father in a favorable light. So I came up with a beautiful fairy tale about Lavrenty Pavlovich, a humanist who tried with all his might to prevent unnecessary bloodshed. Moreover, there are rumors (only rumors, documents on this subject have not yet been published) that it was precisely with his cruelty in the suppression of the Georgian uprising that Beria earned the attention and favor of Stalin. However, there is a document that makes one treat Sergo Lavrentievich's report with great confidence. At the end of the already cited autobiography of 1923, written on the eve of the uprising, Beria asks the Central Committee to give him the opportunity to continue his education at a technical institute, since he sees his vocation in this particular branch of knowledge and has already completed a specialized technical education and will be able to give his experience and knowledge to Soviet construction in this area, and the party will be able to use it, after completing their studies, where it sees fit. The fact is that by the time of his departure from Baku to Tiflis in 1922, Lavrenty Pavlovich managed to complete two courses at the Baku Technical Institute, into which the former technical school was transformed in 1920. Beria studied, presumably, rather formally, since he was absorbed in work in the Cheka and the Central Committee, but the exams and tests for a prominent Chekist were set very liberally. In 1921, Lavrenty Pavlovich was even going to be sent to Belgium to study oil production technology, but then they changed their minds and were sent to operational security work, where by the end of the 23rd he achieved considerable success. And suddenly Beria is seized by a craving for technical knowledge with a likely subsequent transition to economic

work. For the sake of this, he is ready to leave the Chekist career that began so successfully. Isn't it strange? I think that the only logical explanation here is the following. Lavrenty Pavlovich in the autumn of the 23rd knew about the impending uprising and had no doubt that it would be drowned in blood. He probably did not want to participate in the senseless destruction of fellow Georgians. Therefore, he tried to prevent the action, although he understood that there were few chances for this: the Menysheviki did not have confidence in the Chekists. And at the same time he tried to return to Baku to the institute, so as not to participate in the future massacre of the rebels. Did not work out.

If the senior comrades had then satisfied the request of Lavrenty Pavlovich, his fate would have been much happier. With time, Beria would have become a prominent leader of the oil industry, over time, probably, he would have grown to a deputy or even first deputy head of government, and in the days of Brezhnev he quietly retired as a personal pensioner of allied significance. There would have been no fatal shot in the concrete bunker of the headquarters of the Moscow Military District in the 53rd, which ended his life, but in that life there would have been no leadership of the punitive department after Yezhov and the atomic project. Beria would not have become a marshal and would not have entered the Big History, albeit, according to many, with a minus sign. I would venture to express a

completely seditious thought. Lavrenty Pavlovich understood that KGB work was a dirty business, and at that time the young student did not really have a soul for her. So he tried to switch to a cleaner job, to which he had an inclination even before the revolution. But it was not possible to become a petroleum engineer. And then the power corrupted the young man, and he could no longer get out of the system. And when I tried to reform this system in 53, it was too late

I realized that the price of exit is life.

The marriage of Beria is connected with the failed trip to Belgium. Here is what his widow Nina Teimurazovna Gegechkori said about this during the years of perestroika: "I was born in a poor family. It became especially difficult for the mother after the death of her father. I grew up in the family of a relative, Alexander Gegechkori, who took me in to help my mother. We lived then in Kutaisi, where I studied at the primary girls' school. For participation in revolutionary activities, Sasha often went to prison, and his wife Vera went to meet him. I was still

little, everything was interesting to me, and I always ran with Vera to prison on these dates. By the way, then the prisoners were treated well (this evidence obviously contradicts the statement of Beria himself in his autobiography of 1923 that conditions in the Kutaisi prison were unbearable. - B.S.). My future husband was in the same cell as Sasha. I did not pay attention to him, but he, it turns out, remembered me.

After the establishment of Soviet power in Georgia, Sasha, an active participant in the revolution, was transferred to Tbilisi and elected chairman of the Tbilisi Revolutionary Committee. I moved with them. By that time I was already an adult woman, my relationship with my mother (meaning the adoptive mother - Sasha's wife Vera. - **B.S.**) did not work out for me.

I remember that I had the only pair of good shoes, but Vera did not allow me to wear them every day so that they would be worn longer. So I went to school in old rags, tried not to walk along crowded streets - I was so ashamed of my poor clothes.

In the first days of the establishment of Soviet power in Georgia, students organized a protest demonstration against the new government. I also participated in this demonstration. The students were dispersed with water from a fire hose, and I got soaked from head to toe. Wet, I ran home, and Sasha's wife Vera asked: "What happened?" I told how it was. Vera grabbed the belt and gave me a good beating, saying: "You live in the family of Sasha Gegechkori, but do you participate in demonstrations against him?" Once, on the way to

school, Lavrenty met me. After the establishment of Soviet power in Georgia, he often went to Sasha, and I already knew him quite well. He began to pester me with a conversation and said:

"Whether you like it or not, we must meet and talk."

I agreed, and later we met in Tbilisi's Nedzaladevi Park. My sister and brother-in-law lived in that area, and I knew the park well. We sat down

on a bench. Lawrence was wearing a black coat and a student's cap. He said that he had been watching me for a long time and that he really liked me. And then he said that he loves me and wants me to marry him.

I was then sixteen and a half years old. Lawrence turned twenty-two years old.

He explained that the new government was sending him to Belgium to study the experience of oil refining. However, the only requirement was put forward - Lavrenty should marry. I thought about it and

agreed - rather than live in someone else's house, even with relatives, it's better to get married, create your own family. So, without telling anyone, I married Lawrence. And immediately rumors spread that Lavrenty had kidnapped me. No, there was nothing of the sort. I married him of my own accord." For Nina Teimurazovna, this was undoubtedly a marriage of

convenience. Although Nina was from a noble family, poverty had long made her forget aristocratic prejudices. In addition, after the revolution, noble origin had to be hidden, not advertised. Yes, and Lavrenty Pavlovich, it seems, got married not only under the influence of a romantic feeling, but also on the basis of a sober assessment of reality: in order to travel abroad, it was urgently necessary to get a wife. Maybe Beria was somewhat burdened by this marriage and therefore often made fleeting connections on the side? In Tiflis, in August 1924, Beria headed the secret operational unit of the authorized representative of the OGPU in the Transcaucasian Federation, in

1927 he became chairman of the GPU of Georgia and deputy chairman of the GPU of Transcaucasia, and in 1929 he headed, along with the Georgians, all the Transcaucasian Chekists, becoming at the same time the plenipotentiary representative OGPU for Transcaucasia. Lavrenty Pavlovich remained in high Chekist posts until November 1931, when he was made the first secretary of the Communist Party of Georgia and the second secretary of the Transcaucasian Regional Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks. The following year, he became one in three persons, heading the party organizations of Transcaucasia, Georgia and Tbilisi. Then, in 1932, on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the Georgian Cheka, the chairman of the OGPU V.M. Menzhinsky issued a special order, where he noted with great satisfaction that "a huge hard work has been mainly done by our national cadres, grown, educated and tempered in the fire of combat work under the permanent leadership of Comrade. Beria, who, with exceptional instinct, always managed to clearly orientate himself in the most difficult situation, politically correctly resolving

assigned tasks, and at the same time infect employees by personal example, passing on their organizational experience and operational skills, educating them in unconditional devotion to the Communist Party and its Central Committee. To the Order of the Red Banner of the Georgian SSR on the chest of Lavrenty Pavlovich were added the same orders of the RSFSR, the Armenian SSR and the Azerbaijan SSR. In 1934, at the 17th Party Congress, he was immediately elected a full member of the Central Committee.

When Beria and Stalin met, it is not known for certain. Some historians attribute this event to the time of the suppression of the Georgian uprising of the 24th year. The son of Lavrenty Pavlovich Sergo does not write anything about the time of his father's acquaintance with Stalin, he only notes the obvious fact that "the head of the party and state authorized his appointment to the post of leader of Georgia and subsequent transfer to Moscow." It is not clear, however, whether Iosif Vissarionovich Beria knew personally by 1931 or relied on the recommendations of his associates Ordzhonikidze and Mikoyan. Rather, the latter, because the same Sergo Lavrentievich claims that already when he was the head of the communists of Transcaucasia, his father "while Sergo Ordzhonikidze was still alive, sent a number of letters to Stalin through him, in which he did not hide his position: the NKVD is systematically destroying the Georgian intelligentsia, the Georgian people." Since letters to leader Lavrenty Pavlovich had to be transmitted only through the mediation of Politburo member Ordzhonikidze, then most likely direct personal contact, and even more so close, trusting relations between Beria and Stalin did not yet exist. They appeared only with the move of Lavrenty Pavlovich to Moscow. It is noteworthy that this move took place after the conflict between Stalin and Ordzhonikidze and the latter's suicide in February 1937. This means that another patron of Beria, Anastas Ivanovich Mikoyan, also played a role here, with whom they worked in the early 1920s. It was Mikoyan who supervised the NKVD when he was the head of Yezhov's organs and most likely offered Stalin a suitable replacement for the overly active and threatening to become uncontrollable "commissar of steel". A provincial who did not have strong connections in the center and in the NKVD apparatus, but with experience in Chekist work, Beria turned out to be quite a suitable candidate.

In the Transcaucasus, Lavrenty Pavlovich took an active part in the terror of 1937-38, widely used the beating of those under investigation, sanctioned by Yezhov and Stalin. At the February-March Plenum of 1937, he reported that in the last year alone, almost one and a half thousand Mensheviks, Dashnaks and Musavatists returned to Georgia, and "with the exception of individual units, most of the returnees remain enemies of Soviet power, are persons who organize counter-revolutionary, wrecking, espionage, sabotage work. We know that they must be dealt with as enemies." But soon the task fell to Beria to moderate the scope of repression. In August 38, Lavrenty

Pavlovich was appointed First Deputy People's Commissar of Internal Affairs of the USSR N.I. Yezhov, instead of M.P. Frinovsky, who was put at the head of the secondary People's Commissariat of the Navy. Both Mikhail Petrovich and Nikolai Ivanovich really had to "sink" soon (it was not for nothing that Yezhov, shortly before the arrival of Beria, was appointed people's commissar of water transport). The former leaders of the NKVD made a desperate attempt to topple Lavrenty Pavlovich. In a letter of repentance to Stalin at the end of November, after his removal from the NKVD, Yezhov admitted: "I was worried about the appointment of Comrade Beria. I saw in this an element of distrust of myself, but I thought everything would pass. I sincerely considered and still consider him a major worker, I believed that he could take the post of people's commissar. I thought that his purpose was to prepare my release (I thought correctly! - B.S.). Frinovsky advised: "Keep the reins firmly in your hands. Do not mope, but firmly grasp the apparatus so that it does not double between Comrade Beria and me. Do not allow Comrade Beria's people into the apparatus. Frinovsky in the early 30s worked as the chairman of the GPU of Azerbaijan and often clashed with the head of the Transcaucasian GPU, Beria. Now Mikhail Petrovich warned Yezhov what a dangerous enemy he was. It was decided to present to Stalin compromising material on Beria - data on his service in the Musavat counterintelligence. However, Stalin was already aware of how things were in reality (remember Pavlunovsky's letter), and he had long predetermined Yezhov's fate. Realizing that his song was sung, Nikolai Ivanovich, according to Russian custom, went on a drinking binge. On November 23, 1938, he submitted his resignation. On November 24, the Politburo dismissed Yezhov from the post of people's commissar.

Internal Affairs, retaining for him the already meaningless posts of secretary of the Central Committee, chairman of the Party Control Committee and people's commissar of water transport. In April 1939 Nikolai Ivanovich was arrested, and in February 1940 he was arrested. Beria became Yezhov's successor.

Lavrenty Pavlovich began by appointing his own people to key positions in the People's Commissariat. On his initiative, on November 17, 1938, when Yezhov remained the formal head of the NKVD, a resolution of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks and the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR "On arrest, prosecutorial supervision and investigation" was adopted. On December 1, at the suggestion of Beria, the Council of People's Commissars and the Central Committee adopted another resolution concerning the NKVD - "On the procedure for coordinating arrests." But do not exaggerate the role of Lavrenty Pavlovich. In this case, he carried out the will of Stalin, who decided to reduce the scale of repression, the flow of which was already beginning to get out of his control and threatened to flood the country (shortly before his fall, Yezhov proposed arresting half of the party members as hidden "enemies of the people"). However, we recall that in the 53rd year, upon his return to the Ministry of Internal Affairs, Beria, already after the death of Stalin, carried out measures to rehabilitate those previously convicted under political articles and abolish extrajudicial bodies, in particular the Special Meeting at the USSR Ministry of Internal Affairs (for the first time he proposed to do this still in the 45th). I think that Lavrenty Pavlovich really was an opponent of the "great terror", considering it an irrational and harmful deed. The

members of the Central Committee and the government suddenly saw the light. The resolution of November 17 stated: "Mass operations to defeat and uproot enemy elements carried out by the NKVD in 1937-1938, with a simplified investigation and trial, could not but lead to a number of major shortcomings and distortions in the work of the NKVD bodies and the prosecutor's office. The employees of the NKVD have become so unaccustomed to painstaking, systematic intelligence work and have so entered the taste of a simplified procedure for the proceedings that, until very recently, they raise questions about granting them so-called "limits" for mass arrests. The simplified investigation procedure itself was condemned, when "the investigator confines himself to obtaining a confession of his guilt from the accused and does not at all care about supporting this confession with the necessary documentary data", and "testimony

of the arrested person are recorded by the investigators in the form of notes, and then, after a long time, a general protocol is drawn up, and the requirement for verbatim, if possible, fixing the testimony of the arrested person is not fulfilled at all. Very often, an interrogation protocol is not drawn up until the arrested person confesses to the crimes committed by him. Now the NKVD and the prosecutor's office were forbidden to carry out mass arrests and evictions. Any arrests were allowed only with the sanction of the prosecutor's office or by order of the court. Judicial troikas that delivered sentences under a simplified procedure without the participation of the defense and prosecution were also eliminated. All cases from the triples were transferred to the courts or to the Special Conference under the NKVD of the USSR. The investigators were required to comply with the rules of criminal procedure, namely: to complete the investigation within the time limits established by law, to interrogate the arrested no later than 24 hours after their arrest, and to draw up a protocol immediately after the

end of the interrogation. On November 26, one of the first orders of Beria, as head of the NKVD, signed an order on the procedure for implementing the decree of November 17. As part of this order, many arrested people were released from prisons, on which there was no other evidence, except for the confessions knocked out by the investigators, as well as many of those who did not admit their guilt. In 1939, Beria issued a series of orders to remove from office and bring to trial NKVD workers guilty of falsifying criminal cases. On November 9, 1939, an order "On shortcomings in the investigative work of the NKVD bodies" appeared, ordering the release of all those illegally arrested from custody and establishing strict control over compliance with criminal procedure. Of course, the repressions did not affect Beria's nominees, who had previously actively participated in the implementation of the "Yezhovshchina" - the brothers Amayak and Bogdan Kobulov, who held responsible positions in Ukraine and Moscow, S.A. Goglidze, who became the head of the Leningrad NKVD, the new People's Commissar of Internal Affairs of Georgia A.A. Papava, V.N. Merkulov, who became the first deputy of Lavrenty Pavlovich and the head of the Main Directorate of State Security, and since January 41 - People's Commissar of State Security of the USSR, P.Ya. Me-shik, who was appointed assistant to the head of the Investigative Department of the NKVD of the USSR, and later - the head

who became the head of the Foreign Department of the NKVD and some others who worked with Beria in the Transcaucasus. Lavrenty Pavlovich himself, after the XVIII Party Congress in March 1939, was elected a candidate member of the Politburo.

Accurate data on the number of those released from prisons in 1938-1941 as part of the so-called "Beria Thaw" have not yet been published, as well as on the number of those arrested in the same period on political charges. Sergo Beria believes that there were 750-800 thousand of the first, and 20-25 thousand of the second. It is possible to doubt the accuracy of these figures. Most likely, the order was not such that hundreds of thousands were released, and only tens of thousands were imprisoned. In any case, in the period from January 1, 1939 to January 1, 1941, the number of people convicted of counter-revolutionary activities in forced labor camps decreased by only 34,000 people. Prior to that, in 1938 alone, it increased almost two and a half times - from 185 to 454 thousand. The number of prisoners in prisons at first also decreased - from January to September of the 39th from 351 to 178 thousand. But already in September, their number began to grow again - there was a flow of arrests from the "liberated territories" - Western Ukraine and Western Belarus, and later - the Baltic states and Bessarabia. In addition, from the summer of 1940, prisoners began to be placed in prisons for a period of 2 to 4 months for being late for work, producing low-quality products, absenteeism, etc. By December 1, 1940, there were 133 thousand of them. As a result, in January 1941, the prison population peaked at 488,000, only to fall back to 333,000 by May. By that time, many of those arrested had been convicted with the help of special triplets and sent to camps. In total, 540,000 prisoners were released from corrective labor camps in 1939-1940. For comparison: in 1937-1938, 644 thousand people left the camps. The largest number of prisoners gained freedom in 1941 - 624 thousand, but the war was a powerful factor here. A significant part of the men from the camps were released ahead of schedule in order to make up for the colossal losses that the Red Army suffered at the front. In addition, the majority of those released had not political, but criminal articles, and were released in connection with the expiration of the term of imprisonment, and not because of rehabilitation or amnesty. About the number of those rehabilitated in that period

prisoners have only fragmentary information. So, on January 1, 1941, there were 34 thousand liberated from the camps in Kolyma, of which 3 thousand were considered fully rehabilitated. It is clear, however, that the total number of those rehabilitated and amnestied could amount to tens, but by no means hundreds of

thousands of people. Here the number of those shot with the advent of Beria really decreased by an order of magnitude. For the entire period of 1921-1953, 786,098 people were sentenced to death on political grounds. Of this number, 681,692 were shot in 1937-1938, of which 631,897 were sentenced by extrajudicial troikas. Thus, almost half of the 1,372 thousand arrested during the Yezhovshchina period were executed. And in just over two years of being in the NKVD of the sad memory of Nikolai Ivanovich, almost seven-eighths of the total number of those sentenced to death under political articles over the three decades of Stalin's rule were shot. But it would be naive to think that Beria's merit is in stopping the terror. It was not he who made the decisions, but Stalin. However, it is just as unreasonable to lay responsibility for the later repressions on Lavrenty Pavlovich alone. Stalin and other members of the top political leadership of the country should share it with him in fairness. In general, the "Beria thaw" did not

significantly affect the number of prisoners, including political ones. Nevertheless, the release of several thousand members of the party and military elite who survived under Yezhov was reflected in the public consciousness and gave rise to the myth of the mass release of political prisoners from the camps. In fact, a more or less significant number of released political prisoners were only from prisons, where those who had not yet been sentenced were imprisoned. Stalin, with rare exceptions, did not allow the cancellation of previous judicial and extrajudicial decisions, which explains the limited nature of the "Beria thaw".

Among the victims of illegal repression under Beria were many prominent people - director V.E. Meyerhold, journalist M.E. Koltsov, writer I.E. Babel and others. Major party leaders were also shot - R.I. Eikhe, S.V. Kosior, V.Ya. Chubar. A.V. Kosarev, M.S. Kedrov and others (some of them were arrested under Yezhov). In fairness, it should be said that the figures of such

level were repressed at the initiative of Stalin, not Yezhov or Beria. The NKVD, only on behalf of Joseph Vissarionovich, fabricated material against those whom he pointed to. The same illegal

methods of investigation were used against the newly arrested, which the Central Committee formally condemned in November 1938. In May 39, the old Bolshevik M.S. was arrested. Kedrov, who was charged with fictitious charges of espionage, cooperation with the security department and sabotage during the Civil War. Kedrov unsuccessfully appealed to the Central Committee, insisting on his innocence. On August 19, 1939, he wrote, not knowing that his letters would not go further than the Investigative Department of the NKVD: "From the gloomy cell of the Lefortovo prison I appeal to you for help. Hear the cry of horror, do not pass by, intercede, help destroy the nightmare of

interrogations, open the mistake. I suffer innocently. Believe me. Time will show. I am not an agent provocateur of the tsarist secret police, not a spy, not a member of an anti-Soviet organization. For the fifth month I have been asking in vain at each interrogation to bring specific charges against me so that I can refute them, in vain I have been asking the investigators to write down facts from my life that refute

the above charges. In vain. **And from** the very first days of my stay in the harsh Sukhanov prison, repressions began: limiting sleep time to 1–2 hours a day, depriving me of extracts from food, books, walks, even refusing medical care and medicines, despite my serious heart disease.

With my transfer to the Lefortovo prison, the circle of repressions expanded. I was forced to stand for hours, exhausted, in silence in the investigators' offices, they put me, like a schoolboy, face down in a corner, shook me by the scruff of the neck. They grabbed him by the beard, twice put him in a punishment cell, or rather, a cellar. A completely damp and cold room with a walled-up window. Since the beginning of August, investigators gr. gr. Meshik, Adamov, Albogachiev started beating me. During three interrogations, I was beaten on the cheeks because I declare that I am an honest Bolshevik and that they do not and cannot have

Kedrov was also lucky that he was not beaten with rubber clubs. But Meyerhold was not lucky. The world-famous director in letters to Beria, Molotov and the prosecutor's office told in detail how he was beaten. Prosecutor A.Ya. Vyshinsky Vsevolod Emilievich described in detail,

how the tortures went: "They laid me face down on the floor, beat me with a rubber tourniquet on my heels and on my back; when he sat on a chair, they beat him with the same rubber on his legs (from above, with great force) and in places from the knees to the upper parts of the legs; when these places of the legs were flooded with profuse internal hemorrhage, then these red-blue-yellow bruises were again beaten with this tourniquet, and the pain was such that it seemed that boiling water was poured onto the painful sensitive places of the legs (I screamed and cried from pain). They beat me in the face with their hands. "Alexander Yanuarievich, like Lavrenty Pavlovich, was difficult to surprise with such. At the trial, which took place on February 1, 1940, Meyerhold claimed that he "lied to himself only because they beat me with a rubber stick. I decided then to lie and go to the fire. Lavrenty Pavlovich was to send "to

the stake" not hundreds of thousands, as under Yezhov, but many thousands of innocent people. Beria did good, by no means breaking with evil. Yes, and it would be strange to expect to see in a Bolshevik with more than 20 years of experience and a career Chekist a supporter of the rule of law. Beatings are not worse than those that Meyerhold had to experience, and today they are practiced in the internal affairs bodies of our country, which is supposedly considered democratic. When Beria was People's Commissar of the NKVD, the

decision of the Politburo to execute captured Polish officers and interned civilians of Polish nationality from among the intelligentsia and the propertied classes was carried out - a total of almost 22 thousand people. According to Sergo Lavrentievich Beria, his father, at a Politburo meeting held on March 5, 1940, spoke out against the execution of the Poles: "He explained his position at a Politburo meeting as follows: "War is inevitable. The Polish officer corps is a potential ally in the fight against Hitler. One way or another, we will enter Poland, and, of course, the Polish army must be on our side in a future war. It is not difficult to imagine the reaction of the party elite - the father almost lost his post for obstinacy. But even this did not make my father sign the death warrant for the Polish officers."

There is no Beria's signature on the decision to execute the Poles - he was only a candidate member of the Politburo and did not have the right to a decisive vote. The proposal of the NKVD to shoot the Poles was signed by Beria.

However, such an offer was most likely drawn up retroactively. This resolution bears the signatures of members of the Politburo, but there is one notable correction: as part of the troika, which was supposed to stamp the death sentences on the Poles, the name of Beria, which was originally in the typewritten text, was crossed out and the name of B.Z. was entered in ink. Kobulov. This can be regarded as evidence that the proposal signed by the head of the NKVD was not drawn up by him even after the decision of the Politburo was made. Lavrenty Pavlovich himself would not propose himself to the troika, in order to cross out himself later. Most likely, Beria was really against the execution of the Poles and agreed to put his signature only on the condition that his name be crossed out from among those on whose behalf the death sentences would be formally pronounced. Taking into account Beria's post-war position regarding the unification of Germany into a single bourgeois-democratic state, Sergo's story about his father's objections to the execution of the Poles seems quite plausible. In addition to the Poles, in 1939-1941, several tens of thousands of representatives of the Baltic, Western Ukrainian and Western Belarusian national elites were destroyed. For these, like many other crimes against humanity, Beria is responsible as the chief of the NKVD and a member of the country's top leadership. In 1940, 140,000 Polish peasants, the so-called "siegemen", who moved here after 1920, were deported from the western regions of Belarus and Ukraine in 1940. A few days before the start of the Great Patriotic War, a mass deportation of "unreliable elements" from the Baltic states and Bessarabia was also carried out.

By the time Beria arrived, the NKVD was not only a punitive, but also a powerful economic mechanism. Prisoners of the Gulag worked at numerous construction sites. In 1940, the NKVD completed 13% of all capital work in the country's national economy. In 1941, the organizations of the People's Commissariat were to master capital investments worth 6.8 billion rubles and produce industrial products worth 1.8 billion rubles. These "huge plans" were to be realized thanks to the forced labor of almost two million

prisoners.

During the Great Patriotic War, the role of the NKVD in the economy increased even more. In 1941-1944, Beria's department accounted for almost 15% of all capital construction. The convicts built 612 field and 230 permanent airfields, aircraft factories in the Kuibyshev region, an aircraft factory in Omsk, 3 blast furnaces with an annual capacity of almost 1 million tons of pig iron. 16 open-hearth and electric furnaces, which produced up to half a million tons of steel per year, rolling mills for 542 thousand tons of steel, put into operation dozens of mines and cuts, where up to 7 million tons of coal were mined per year (the same convicts chopped coal), 10 compressor stations for the oil industry, a plant for nitroglycerine powders and much, much more. At the enterprises of the NKVD during the same period, 315 tons of gold, 9 million tons of coal, 6 million tons of blister copper, 407 thousand tons of oil, 1 million tons of chrome ore were mined, 30 million mines were produced, 90 million cubic meters were produced. . m of wood and firewood. Stalin was pleased with the successes of the NKVD on the economic front, and this was one of the main reasons for the transfer of Beria shortly after the end of the war to economic work. What Lavrenty Pavlovich dreamed about, dreamed of back in the early 20s, came true. Maybe even then, in Baku, I felt that the work of the KGB was too ungrateful and that the higher you climb the career ladder of the punitive department, the harder it will fall. Another thing is economic work. There is a serious chance to survive at the very top of the pyramid. But Lavrenty Pavlovich had to supervise a very specific industry - the design and production of atomic and hydrogen bombs. For the construction of nuclear facilities, it was planned to make extensive use of the Gulag, and to speed up scientific and technical developments, to extract American and British atomic secrets with the help of intelligence. Beria had experience in both, and even what no, but a technical education. Therefore, the choice fell on him.

It also played a role that Lavrenty Pavlovich created a network of research institutions in the Gulag system - the so-called "sharashkas", where scientists prisoners worked on defense projects. Often they were arrested only in order to be put to work in a "sharashka" on topics of interest to the military and punitive departments. There worked, in particular, the famous designers A.N. Tupolev and S.P. Korolev. One of the employees of the Sharashka, the Italian aircraft designer Count Robert Oros di

Bartini, who imprudently came to the USSR in the 1920s to build socialism, and now proving that he was not guilty of anything, Lavrenty Pavlovich answered with cheerful cynicism: "Of course, I know that you are not to blame. If he was guilty, he would have been shot. And so: the plane - into the air, and you - the Stalin Prize and

freedom. We will say more about Beria's work on the atomic bomb a little later. For now, let's go back to the pre-war years. In 1940, Beria gave Stalin a great gift - he organized the assassination of Trotsky. Strictly speaking, Lavrenty Pavlovich had nothing to do with the major failure of Soviet intelligence, which failed to find out about the plan of the German attack on the USSR. Since January 1941, intelligence was transferred to the new People's Commissariat of State Security of the USSR, headed by Merkulov. At the same time, Beria was awarded the title of General Commissar of State Security, equivalent to the rank of marshal in the army, and from February 41, he became deputy chairman of the Council of People's Commissars, in charge of security agencies.

With the outbreak of war, the NKGB was again merged with the NKVD, headed by Lavrenty Pavlovich. Beria was also appointed a member of the State Defense Committee (from May 16, 1944 he became deputy chairman of the State Defense Committee) and in this capacity oversaw the country's defense industry. On September 30, 1943, for success in the production of weapons and ammunition, he was awarded the title of Hero of Socialist Labor. It must be admitted that the energy of Lavrenty Pavlovich contributed a lot to the fact that the Red Army had an abundance of tanks and aircraft, mines and shells. Although here, too, there were some additions and there is reason to suspect that on paper the production of certain types of weapons was overestimated by one and a

half to two times. After the landing of the German Junkers-52 aircraft on Red Square in May 1941, on the very eve of the war and in its first days, several generals associated with aviation and air defense were arrested, as well as the former Chief of the General Staff K.A. Meretskov and People's Commissar for Armaments B.L. Vannikov. The last two are lucky. After spending several months in prison and forcing them to confess to conspiracy and espionage in favor of Germany, Kirill Afanasyevich and Boris Lvovich were released and reinstated in the ranks of generals

According to Beria, Stalin authorized the execution of G.M. Stern, P.V. Rychagova, A.D. Loktionova, Ya.V. Smushkevich and others arrested in the "case of aviators". This performance, as in the case of the Poles, Lavrenty Pavlovich wrote at the direction of the Master. The unfortunate people were shot in Kuibyshev on October 28, 1941 on false accusations that they were conspirators and German agents. During the investigation, most of them could not stand the beatings and repented of the crimes they did not commit. Only the commander of the Baltic District, Colonel-General A.D. Loktionov steadfastly endured the torture and did not confess to anything, which, however, did not save him from the bullet. Three times Beria

went to the front. Twice - in August - September 1942 and in March 1943 to the Caucasus as a representative of the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command. The third time he happened to accompany Stalin during a trip to the Rzhev region on the Kalinin Front in August 1943. As a commander, Lavrenty Pavlovich had to act only once in his life - in the fall of the 42nd in the Caucasus. There were diametrically opposed opinions about how successful his actions were, and the day of Beria's arrest naturally became the boundary between them. Back in 1950, a certain M.I. Baramia defended his Ph.D. thesis on "The Outstanding Role of Comrade Beria in the Defense of the Caucasus" (an arrest in the so-called "Mingrelian case" prevented it from being published as a separate book). General of the Army Hero of the Soviet Union I. I. Maslennikov, who in 1939 was nominated by Beria to the post of commander of the border troops and deputy people's commissar of internal affairs, and in 1942–1943 commanded the Northern Group of Forces of the Transcaucasian Front, also wrote about the military art of Lavrenty Pavlovich in the battle for the Caucasus. and the North Caucasian Front. In 1952, an article by Zavyalov and Kalyadin "The Battle for the Caucasus" appeared in the August issue of the Military Thought magazine. Regarding this article, Maslennikov sent a special letter to the head of the Military Scientific Directorate of the General Staff, where he noted: "On page 56, characterizing the activities of the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command of the USSR, the authors only casually and very briefly mention the enormous creative work and the fundamental political organizational measures that were carried out by comrade

Lavrenty Pavlovich Beria (in the last months of his life, Stalin lost interest in Beria, and his name was mentioned less often than before in the press. - **B.S.**), who created a radical change that changed the whole situation, despite the extremely difficult situation that developed on the Caucasian fronts by August 1942. A similar description of the activities of Comrade L.P. Beria does not give an exhaustive picture of all the activities that were carried out under the personal and direct leadership of Comrade Lavrenty Pavlovich Beria. L.P. Beria, owning the Stalinist style of leadership, by personal example showed examples of the Bolshevik, state, military, party-political and economic

leadership of the Transcaucasian Front (August 1942 - January 1943), brilliantly implemented the instructions of Comrade Stalin. During the investigation into the Beria case, the generals, quite naturally, spoke completely differently about the military talents of the defeated marshal. Generals of the General Staff Pokrovsky and Platonov wrote a special report for investigators "On the

issue of Beria's criminal activities during the defense of the Caucasus." There, in particular, it was stated: "To carry out the task of defense in the eastern part of the Caucasus Range, on August 8, the Northern Group of Forces of the Transcaucasian Front was created, the commander of which, apparently, at the insistence of Beria, was appointed General Maslennikov, who had previously unsuccessfully commanded the army on the Kalinin Front ... General Maslennikov, undoubtedly, taking advantage of the patronage of Beria, often ignored the instructions of the front commander and, by his actions, delayed the regrouping of troops.

And Lieutenant General S.M. Shtemenko, who traveled with Beria to the Caucasus at the head of an operational group of officers of the General Staff, testified: "There was a lot in Beria's actions that not only did not contribute to the defense of the Caucasus, but, on the contrary, disorganized the defense. First of all, Beria created a special task force parallel to the headquarters of the front, headed by a general from the NKVD. This group included people who were not very competent in military affairs.

The second act of Beria, which disorganized the defense of the Caucasus, was the replacement of the commander of the 46th Army, General Sergatskov, with General Leselidze, who did not discredit himself in any way. Such an unnecessary replacement

commander in a tense situation could not help to strengthen the defense. During Beria's stay in the Caucasus, the military command was actually removed from his leadership. Beria in his activities sought to rely on the NKVD officers, most of whom were completely incompetent in military affairs.

In essence, all these actions of Beria, connected with the defense of the passes of the Main Caucasian Range, as the main task at that time, harmed this defense and created favorable conditions for the enemy, and thereby increased the threat of German penetration into the Transcaucasus.

Shtemenko was echoed by the former commander of the Transcaucasian Front, General of the Army I.V. Tyulenev: "NKVD troops arrived at the Zak-Front. These troops were on special account and at the disposal of Beria. Therefore, they were not used

for active combat operations. I put before the Stavka the question of transferring at least a part of the NKVD troops stationed on the territory of the Zakfront (15-20 regiments) to the command of the Transfrontal Front. I.V. Stalin approved my idea, but Beria, who was present at the same time, sharply opposed this, allowing rude attacks on the front command. Of the 121 thousand troops of the NKVD, which were mostly inactive, Beria agreed to transfer only 5-7 thousand to the disposal of the Zakfront, and then at the insistence

of I.V. Stalin." But Tyulenev was appointed commander of the front on the recommendation of Beria! On September 1, 1942, Lavrenty Pavlovich telegraphed Stalin: "I consider it necessary to appoint Tyulenev as commander of the Transcaucasian Front, who, for all his shortcomings, is more in line with this appointment than Budyonny. It should be noted that in connection with his retreats, Budyonny's authority in the Caucasus has fallen significantly, not to mention the fact that, due to his illiteracy, he will certainly fail the case. The former commander of the First Cavalry, Beria, did not put high hopes, and he did not place too high hopes on his former subordinate cavalry soldier Tyulenev. And it seems that he was not mistaken in

his assessment. Shtemenko, later describing his monthly trip to the Transcaucasus, although he does not mention a single word of Beria (he transfers his functions to the head of the Operational Directorate of the General Staff,

Lieutenant P.I. Bodin), but does not seem to find any traces of the disorganization of the Soviet defense. Here is how he describes in his memoirs the one who preceded the Supreme Commander-in-Chief: "Pay special attention to the Baku direction," Bodin said, turning to Bodin. "You will have to take these colonels with you when you go." Further, according to Sergei Matveyevich, events developed as follows: "Only a few days after being called to Headquarters, namely on August 21, Bodin announced to me: "Get ready, tomorrow at 4 o'clock you will go with me to the **airfield** . Get a cipher clerk and

a few referrals." In the morning, at the appointed time, we drove in Bodin's car to the Central Airfield. The C-47 plane was already waiting for us there. Bodin introduced himself as the commander of the ship, Colonel V.G. Grachev.

We flew to Tbilisi through Central Asia. The direct route there was already blocked by the Germans. We landed in Krasnovodsk in the evening, and when it got dark, we went across the Caspian Sea to Baku, Tbilisi.

We landed in Tbilisi almost at midnight and went straight from the airfield to the front headquarters. The city has not yet slept. Many of the streets were brightly lit and full of people. P.I. Bodin immediately heard the report of the

chief of staff of the front, A.I. Subbotin and explained with what tasks we arrived. There were quite a few of them: to clarify the situation on the spot, to outline additional measures to strengthen the defense of Transcaucasia and put them into practice, to create reserves from the troops that retreated and retreat to Transcaucasia from the north, as well as by mobilizing new contingents from the local population, and, finally, to speed up preparation of defensive lines, primarily in the Baku direction. In conclusion, Bodin turned to the front commander: "Do you know that the allies are trying to use our difficult situation on the fronts and wrest consent to the entry of British troops into the Transcaucasus? This, of course, cannot be allowed. The State Defense Committee considers the defense of Transcaucasia to be the most important state task, and we are obliged to take all measures to repel the onslaught of the enemy, bleed him, and then defeat him. Hitler's hopes and the desires of the allies must be buried (why is the chief of the Operations Directorate of the General Staff suddenly starting to speak on behalf of the State Defense Committee? And why does the lieutenant general, not at all embarrassed, reprimand the commander of the front, Marshal Budyonny? Yes

because this monologue was actually delivered not by Bodin, but by Beria, I have no doubts about this; the general commissar of state security could not only reprimand the marshal, but, if necessary, wipe it into camp dust, as Lavrenty Pavlovich did with Marshal Blucher. - **B.S.**) In practice, our activity here began with the fact that

already on August 24 martial law was introduced in Transcaucasia. All the troops that were retreating in an organized manner from the north were put on the defensive on the Terek, in the foothills of the Caucasus Range, in the Tuapse and Novorossiysk directions. And those units and formations that turned out to be bloodless in the previous battles, lost their controls or weapons, were withdrawn to the rear. On the main, Baku, direction, on August 28, the 58th Army began to form. A consolidated cavalry corps was concentrated in the Kizlyar area.

After we carefully examined the situation, it was decided to create defensive areas of operationally important centers. In total, there were three such districts: Baku Special, Grozny and Vladikavkaz. Their chiefs received the rights of deputy commanders of the armies who defended the approaches to these areas. An entire infantry division was placed on the

defense of the Georgian Military Highway. Its main forces blocked the entrance to the Ordzhonikidze area. Another division from Gori was transferred there.

The Baku direction caused a lot of trouble. When we went to the place, we found that the construction of defensive lines was going very slowly there. There was clearly not enough strength for this. On September 16, the State Defense Committee, on the proposal of the military (more precisely, Beria. - **B.S.**), adopted a special resolution on the mobilization of 90 thousand local residents for defensive construction in the regions of Makhachkala, Derbent and Baku daily. After that, things went into full swing. Day and night, trenches, anti-tank ditches were built, and gouges were installed. In addition, on September 29, the Headquarters ordered a number of measures to strengthen the defense here and sent 100 tanks here for the

intended purpose. A no less disturbing situation has developed on the Taman Peninsula and in Novorossiysk. On September 1, on the basis of the North Caucasian Front, the Black Sea Group of Forces was created there

Transcaucasian front. A few days later, Lieutenant General I.E. took command of this group. Petrov. The Military Council of the Front proposed to appoint Major General A.A. to the commander of the 47th Army and the entire Novorossiysk defensive region. Grechko (considers the replacement of the former commander of the 47th Army and a member of the Military Council of the Transcaucasian Front L.M. Kaganovich as justified, who claimed that "there was no spirit of confidence at the top of the 47th Army." - B.S.), and the head of the **defense** himself the city of Novorossiysk - Rear Admiral S.G. Gorshkov (in fact, these candidates were chosen by Beria. - **B.S.**). This proposal was approved by the Stavka. The results were immediate. On September 10, Soviet troops stopped the enemy in the eastern part of Novorossiysk between the cement factories and forced him to go on the defensive.

The main Caucasian ridge was not included in the zone of operations of either the Black Sea or the Northern groups. The 46th Army, which defended it, was supposed to be directly subordinate to the front command. But then a special body appeared at the headquarters of the front, called the "headquarters of the defense forces of the Caucasian ridge." It was headed by General G.L. Petrov from the NKVD. It must be said frankly that it was a completely unnecessary, intermediate instance. In fact, this headquarters replaced the control of the 46th

Army. Things clearly did not go well with the defense of the mountains. The front command exaggerated their inaccessibility too much, for which already on August 15 they paid with the Klukhorsky pass. The Marukh Pass was about to be taken, as a result of which there would be a threat of the Germans going south to the Black Sea. Mistakes made were corrected in the most hasty manner. Detachments of climbers and residents of high mountain regions, in particular Svans, were urgently formed and sent to protect the passes. There, on the passes, additional forces from the personnel troops were pulled up. In the area of Krasnaya Polyana and to the east of it, a large detachment of Colonel Piyashev took up the defense, blocking the enemy's path to the sea. Armed detachments of workers also advanced into the mountains. The entire multinational family of the peoples of the Caucasus rose up against the enemy. On the battle lines and behind enemy lines, there was a disastrous struggle for uninvited guests.

It turns out that all the measures for the defense of Transcaucasia, taken during his stay there, Bery, Shtemenko, a very qualified General Staff officer, considered correct forty-five years later. Sergei Matveyevich did not like only the creation of the headquarters of the NKVD General G.L. Petrov (maybe he simply did not have a relationship with this general?). And the appointment of General K.N. Leselidze does not consider it a mistake. Maybe that's why he gave his last name to the investigators, because Konstantin Nikolayevich died in the 44th and could not harm him, Shtemenko, in any way. Just like replacing Beria with Bodin was completely safe. Pavel Ivanovich, left by the chief of staff of the Transcaucasian Front, on November 1, 1942, together with a group of officers, came under bombardment in the Ordzhonikidze area and the next day died from his wounds (during that bombardment, L.M. Kaganovich, a member of the Military Council of the front, was also seriously wounded) . But he had the opportunity to blame all the mistakes and failures on Beria. After all, Marshal Zhukov commemorated Lavrenty Pavlovich in his memoirs, of course, only in black colors. Sergei Matveyevich, however, preferred not to name the former chief of the NKVD by name, but on the other hand he clearly showed the insiders with some details who actually flew with *him* to the Caucasus. Because knowledgeable people knew, for example, that

Colonel V.G. Grachev was Beria's personal pilot. It turns out that Shtemenko was cunning before the investigators in 1953, when he denounced the "enemy of the people" Beria for his treacherous role in the defense of the Caucasus. He must have feared that they might be accused of being close to Lavrenty Pavlovich and drawn into his case. After all, many military leaders, perhaps not without reason, considered Sergei Matveyevich "a man of Beria." Here is the former Chief of the General Staff, Marshal A.M. Vasilevsky in 1976 characterized Shtemenko in a conversation with Konstantin Simonov: "He is a militarily educated person, very hard-working, and not only hard-working, but also capable, energetic, with strong-willed qualities. When Stalin sent Beria to the Caucasus with instructions to save the situation there after the defeat of the Southern Front, Beria asked to recommend which of the General Staff workers he should take with him, and we recommended Shtemenko to him as a young and capable staff worker; he took it with him, and a few

Shtemenko was with him for months. This, unfortunately, later determined a lot both in his fate and in his behavior.

Now let's listen to how Sergo Beria's trip to Transcaucasia, who flew with his father as a radio operator (probably he was the cipher clerk Shtemenko writes about), was remembered: "The defense of the Caucasus was most vividly deposited in my memory. My father was sent there as a representative of the Headquarters, and I ended up in the North Caucasus with a group of officers of the General Staff, being directly subordinated to Sergei Matveyevich Shtemenko as the head of the radio station. V

We flew from Moscow on my father's plane. Shtemenko, he was still a colonel then, Lieutenant General Bodin, several other officers. Even in Moscow,

a few hours before departure, my father ordered to collect servicemen of Georgian nationality from different fronts - the middle command staff. Say, regimental commanders. These people, my father believed, with their combat experience, excellent knowledge of local conditions in the formation of units that were supposed to defend the Caucasus, were simply irreplaceable. Even with us, several such officers have already flown. We flew through Baku. And here it was not

without trouble. The plane caught fire, and only the skill of Colonel Grachev, his father's personal pilot, made it possible to bring down the flames in the air. At night we landed safely in Tbilisi. Wasting no time, our group went to Mozdok, on the outskirts of which there were already fights.

Colonel-General Maslennikov, head of the border troops, deputy people's commissar of internal affairs, was already waiting for my father there. By order of his father, shortly before that, he, along with several border units, was transferred by air to this area, where the border guards, having neither tanks nor anti-tank artillery, were to stand in the way of Kleist's tank army.

Back in Moscow, my father agreed with Stalin that the units that had been sent to Iran at one time would be returned to the Union and used for the defense of the Caucasus. Separate anti-tank mobile formations from the "Iranian" units were supposed to arrive at the scene in ten days, but this time had to be held out. Forces for real defense was clearly not enough.

The father considered the closure of the passes to be a priority. They immediately they also blocked the border units and the mountain rifle division.

All these two weeks, until the Germans were stopped and the situation stabilized, my father was there. And only when he was convinced that the defense was reliable, he left for Novorossiysk. An even more alarming situation

developed on the Southern Front. The front headquarters completely lost control of the troops and was demoralized. In agreement with the Headquarters and the GKO, my father immediately dismissed Semyon Budyonny from the post of front commander.

I saw Budyonny, who, it seemed to me, was in a state of prostration. When his father came to him, he began to convince: "There is no need to protect these tangerine groves, we must leave!" Father, although he knew that, as a military leader, was Marshal Budyonny, he was amazed. The front commander could not clearly explain where which units were located, who commanded them. When he reported to his father about the situation, he immediately realized that there was nothing more to talk about. Interrupting the conversation, the father began to call the commanders of all ranks and find out what was really going on there. Before my eyes they made a map of hostilities, and Marshal Budyonny sat on the sidelines with an absent look. It seemed to me that he did not really understand what was at stake. At

the same time, my father appointed two young commanders as commanders of the armies. Both, as far as I understood then, made a good impression on him with their competence and determination. We are talking about Konstantin

Nikolayevich Leselidze (commander of the 46th Army. - **B.S.**) and about the second nominee of his father, Andrei Antonovich Grechko (commander of the 47th Army, and in mid-October, who led the 18th Army near Novorossiysk, where he was the head of the political department was the future general secretary L. I. Brezhnev. - **B. S.**) In the Novorossiysk region, and the fighting was going on in the city itself, we stayed for a week. My father used this time to the maximum. I remember one conversation he had at the headquarters of the Southern Front (probably, in reality, the Black Sea Group of Forces of the Transcaucasian Front. - **B.S.**) immediately upon arrival. Father inquired about the balance of power

between the warring parties. Here it turned out that there were quite enough fighters, but in the second echelon. Leaked, reported, out

first. Well, anything can happen in a war, but where are the commanders? In a word, some people got it, but they put things in order. ”

In general, Sergo Lavrentievich's story does not contradict Shtemenko's testimony. The fact that Beria's predecessors, as they say, “overslept” the passes, is also recognized by Ivan Vladimirovich Tyulenev in his memoirs: “Analyzing now the reasons for the capture of these important passes by the enemy, it should be said that this was a considerable part of the fault of the command and headquarters of the Transcaucasian Front, recklessly who decided that the passes themselves were inaccessible to the enemy. Some of us considered the main task of the troops of the front to be the defense of the Black Sea coast, where the main forces of the 46th Army were deployed. And she, in turn, organized the defense of the passes incorrectly and simply "overslept" them. The enemy had to be met on the slopes of the mountains, and not wait until he rises. Tyulenev himself was well acquainted with Beria, since he commanded the Transcaucasian District in 1938, replacing Yegorov, just at the time when Lavrenty Pavlovich was the first secretary of the Communist Party of Georgia. The appointment of Leselidze also becomes clear - Beria, in the defense of the Caucasus, was going to rely primarily on Georgians, and therefore he selected cadres of Georgian officers who were to be commanded by a Georgian general. There was not only the completely understandable national feeling of Lavrenty Pavlovich, but also a sober calculation. Many years of experience in Transcaucasia convinced Beria that among the local peoples, it was the Georgians who were relatively more loyal to the Soviet government. Stalin made certain indulgences to his compatriots - he took less manufactured products from Georgia, and gave more supplies from centralized funds. As a result, the standard of living here was higher than in Azerbaijan and Armenia, not to mention the mountainous republics of the North Caucasus. In addition, many Georgians were proud that their fellow countryman became the head of the former Russian Empire. Therefore, there were fewer deserters in the Georgian units than in the Armenian and Azerbaijani ones. Just on the eve of Beria's trip to the Caucasus, on August 20, Stalin gave a directive to the command of the Transcaucasian Front, demanding that 3,767 Armenians, 2,721 Azerbaijanis and 740 representatives of the "Dagestan nationalities" be withdrawn from the 61st Infantry Division and sent to spare parts as unreliable.

As for the accusations that Beria, with sabotage intentions, did not give the NKVD divisions under his control to the front, then at the trial in December 53, Lavrenty Pavlovich himself (or a person similar to him) answered the question of the presiding marshal I.S. Koneva: "Why did you, having at your disposal more than 120 thousand people of the NKVD troops, did not allow them to be used for the defense of the Caucasus?" "I affirm that there was no shortage of troops there. The passes were closed. I believe that we have done a lot of work to organize the defense of the Caucasus. I have not said before why I did not give the NKVD troops for the defense of the Caucasus. The fact is that the eviction of Chechens and Ingush was supposed.

Well, here one cannot but agree with Beria's reasons. The Red Army, even without the NKVD, had an abundance of troops in the Caucasus, only now the troops strove, without getting involved in battles, to quickly retreat to the second echelon. The divisions of the NKVD were not trained in combat operations at the front against the regular enemy army. Beria, of course, could not say anything about the planned expulsion of the North Caucasian peoples to the commander of the Transcaucasian Front, Tyulenev, since this operation was being prepared in great secrecy. And even without preparations for deportation (postponed in the end for the 44th year), the NKVD troops had enough things to do in the Caucasus. I had to fight against the partisan detachments of the Ingush and Chechens, as well as other local peoples who did not stop their sorties all the years of Soviet power and saw in the Germans their liberators not only from Stalin, but also from the Russian Empire. In the program documents of the Special Party of Caucasian Fighters, which united 11 peoples of the Caucasus, but operated mainly in Checheno-Ingushetia, the goal was to fight "against Bolshevik barbarism and Russian despotism", the slogan "Caucasus to Caucasians!" (which provided for the eviction of Russians and Jews) and the task was to "ensure the complete disorganization of the rear, the remnants of the Soviet military in the Caucasus, accelerate the death of Bolshevism in the Caucasus and act in the name of Russia's defeat in the war with Germany", and subsequently "create a free fraternal Federal Republic in the Caucasus - the state of the fraternal peoples of the Caucasus under the mandate of the German Empire. Even at the very beginning of the war; On July 8, 1941, Beria authorized a military operation "to elimin

Khildikharoevsky and Maistinsky gorges of Georgia, by the forces of 6 regiments of internal troops, reinforced by several detachments of the NKVD. The insurrectionary movement especially intensified in the summer of 1942, with the German troops approaching the Main Caucasian Range. During the days of Beria's stay in the Caucasus, at the end of August, Chechen detachments liquidated collective farms and Soviet bodies in a number of villages in mountainous Chechnya and entered into battle with military garrisons located in regional centers. In late September - early October, a major uprising broke out in the Vedensky and Cheberloevsky districts, in the preparation of which German paratroopers participated. In total, up to 25 thousand rebels operated on the territory of the Chechen-Ingush Republic. By the way, the State Security Captain S.I. Albogachiev, it seems, is the same one who unsuccessfully tried to force a confession from M.S. Kedrov in August 39th. In September 1943, Albogachiev was suspected of having links with the leader of the rebels and the founder of the Special Party of Caucasian Brothers Hasan Israilov (Terloev), by the way, a graduate of the Communist University of the Working People of the East, and was recalled to the reserve. Albogachiev turned to Stalin with a letter, where he asked "to use me in the sharpest section, where the work would be visible to the people's commissar" (i.e., Beria). The letter was sent to Lavrenty Pavlovich with a Stalinist visa. We do not know how Albogachiev was further used in the service and how he reacted to the subsequent deportation of his countrymen, but it seems that he was not repressed.

The Karachays

and Balkars also fought against the Soviet power, and in Dagestan it was restless. Under these conditions, Beria did not dare to send parts of the NKVD to the front, fearing that a wave of uprisings would flood the North Caucasus. Beria saw the only way to eliminate the insurgent movement in the immediate deportation of Chechens, Ingush, Karachays and Balkars, otherwise the Germans, if they managed to break through the Main Caucasian Range, would have received tens of thousands of fighters - staunch opponents of Soviet power. However, the encirclement of the German grouping in Stalingrad at the end of November 1942 dramatically changed the overall strategic situation in favor of the Soviet Union, including in the Caucasus, which made it possible to delay the deportation.

And how were the events in the Caucasian theater of operations assessed by the German side at the end of August and September 1942, when Beria was there? In the diary of the Chief of the General Staff of the German Land Forces, Colonel General Franz Halder at the front of Army Group A, operating in the Caucasus, during this period, mainly only "local successes" are noted. The only major achievement of the Wehrmacht was the occupation of Novorossiysk. German troops broke into the city on September 6, and by the 10th, the front had stabilized on the eastern outskirts of the city in the area of the Oktyabr cement plant. However, the Soviet troops kept the city and Tsemesskaya Bay under fire, which did not allow the Germans to use the Novorossiysk port. The fall of Novorossiysk was predetermined even before the arrival of Beria. From the Kerch Peninsula, a powerful German-Romanian grouping of 4 divisions with a sufficient number of landing craft hung over the city. On August 16–18, German troops moving from Rostov reached Temryuk and Krymskaya station, and on August 23 they took Temryuk. The fall of Novorossiysk was predetermined, but the Germans could not achieve the main strategic goal - to break through into the Transcaucasus. Just on September 9, Hitler dismissed the commander of Army Group A, Field Marshal Wilhelm List, and decided to replace Halder in the near future. This was primarily due to the stop of the offensive in the Caucasus.

In fairness, it is worth saying that Beria's mission to stabilize the front was facilitated by the fact that the Germans no longer had the strength to continue the offensive towards Baku oil, as more and more troops were absorbed by Stalingrad. Field Marshal List reported to Hitler back in mid-August that "with the forces at his disposal and with such extended communications, he could not achieve the operational goal set for him by the High Command" - the capture of oil-bearing regions. But, in any case, Lavrenty Pavlovich coped with his task and did not let the Germans go to Baku.

In 1944, Beria had to deal with the long-planned deportation of the North Caucasian peoples. For this police operation, he was awarded the Order of Suvorov, 1st degree. The result for the "repressed peoples" was tragic. In total, about 873 thousand Karachais, Kalmyks, Chechens,

Ingush, Crimean Tatars, as well as Greeks, Bulgarians and Armenians of Crimea. Of these, by October 1945, only 741.5 thousand people remained alive in places of exile in Kazakhstan and Central Asia. Hundreds of thousands of Germans from the Volga region, Ukraine and Crimea suffered no less victims, the deportation of which was carried out back in 1941.

Beria reported to Stalin about the operation to resettle Chechens and Ingush, that 19 thousand operatives of the NKVD-NKGB and Smersh and about 100 thousand soldiers and officers of the NKVD troops, "drawn from various regions," participated in it. This is where the figures of 120,000 servicemen in the NKVD divisions in the Caucasus in 1942, which appeared during the trial of Beria, probably came from. Meanwhile, Tyulenev, as we remember, spoke only about 15-20 regiments of the NKVD troops, in which, even taking into account other individual units, there were hardly more than 40-50 thousand soldiers and commanders. The deportation operation was carried out by Lavrenty Pavlovich in a Chekist manner competently. On the eve of it, he told Stalin the main ideas of his plan: "It was reported to the Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars of the Chechen-Ingush Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic, Mollaev, about the government's decision to evict the Chechens and Ingush and about the motives that formed the basis of this decision. Mollaev shed tears after my message, but pulled himself together and promised to fulfill all the tasks that would be given to him in connection with the eviction. Then, in Grozny, together with him, 9 leading officials from Chechens and Ingush were scheduled and convened, and they were informed about the progress of the eviction of Chechens and Ingush and the reasons for the eviction. We assigned 40 republican party and Soviet workers from Chechens and Ingush to 24 districts with the task of picking up 2-3 people from the local activists for each settlement for agitation. A conversation was held with the most influential clerics in Checheno-Ingushetia B. Arsanov, A.-G. Yandarov and A. Gaysumov, they volunteered to help through the mullahs and other local authorities. The eviction begins at dawn on February

23 this year. It was supposed to cordon off areas in order to prevent the population from leaving the territory of settlements. The population will be invited to the gathering, part of the gathering will be released to collect things, and the rest will be disarmed and taken to the places of loading.

The next day, the People's Commissar of Internal Affairs reported with satisfaction to the Supreme Commander-in-Chief that "the eviction is proceeding normally. There are no noteworthy incidents. There were 6 cases of attempts to resist by individuals who were stopped by arrest or the use of weapons. Of those scheduled for seizure in connection with the operation, 842 people were arrested."

Having fulfilled the unenviable role of goats provocateurs leading the herd to the slaughter, religious authorities and representatives of the Soviet party activists shared the fate of their fellow tribesmen, only a week later. On March 1, Beria reported to Stalin: "Today a train was sent with former senior officials and religious authorities of Chechen-Ingushetia, who were used in the operation."

On July 9, 1945, Lavrenty Pavlovich Beria was awarded the highest military rank of Marshal of the Soviet Union, however, not for military victories, but for successes on the economic and punitive front. At the end of the year, he formally left the service in the NKVD, and in March of the next, 46th, he became a full member of the Politburo. However, even earlier, the affairs of the native People's Commissariat faded into the background for him. After the victory over Germany, Lavrenty Pavlovich had to create a Soviet atomic bomb as soon as possible in order to eliminate the American monopoly and free Stalin's hands in international politics. Beria widely attracted prisoners to the construction of nuclear facilities. How many of them perished in the uranium mines is unknown to this day. There are rumors that the number goes to tens of thousands of victims. Back in 1944,

a special department "C" was created in the depths of the People's Commissariat of State Security, dealing with atomic problems. It was headed by a person close to Beria - one of the organizers of the assassination of Trotsky, Lieutenant General Pavel Anatolyevich Sudoplatov, who was also engaged in terror and sabotage. At the beginning of 1945, the scientific director of the "Uranium Project" I.V. Kurchatov wrote a letter to Beria that Molotov, who was in charge of the project, was clumsy and slow and had still not been able to organize geological surveys of uranium ores. Lavrenty Pavlovich had taken care of Igor Vasilyevich before that. At the end of 1943, Kurchatov was elected to the Academy of Sciences for an additional place specially created for him. Beria later spoke to the deputy

Sudoplatov in science to Professor Ya.P. Terletsky about Kurchatov: "We made him an akzdemik!" Now Lavrenty Pavlovich immediately reported to Stalin about Kurchatov's complaint against Molotov. Iosif Vissarionovich decided to make Deputy Chairman of the State Defense Committee Beria responsible for the superbomb, believing that since he was responsible for the production of weapons, the most powerful weapons should pass entirely through his diocese. On February 28, 1945, signed by the head of the NKGB Merkulov, a memorandum on the progress of work on the creation of an atomic bomb in the United States, which Lavrenty Pavlovich rated as "important" in his resolution, fell on Beria's desk. The document emphasized: "Research work carried out by the leading scientists of England and the USA on the use of intra-atomic energy to create an atomic bomb showed that this type of weapon should be considered practically feasible and the problem of its development is currently reduced to two main tasks: 1. Production of the necessary amount of fissile

elements - uranium-235 and plutonium.

2. Structural development of the actuation of the bomb. Now Beria dealt mainly with nuclear problems. General Pyotr Semyonovich Motinov, who brought uranium samples from Canada to Moscow from Soviet agent physicist Allan Nan May, recalled; "At the airport, the Director himself met me (head of army intelligence, Colonel-General F.F. Kuznetsov. - **B.S.**). With great care, I took the precious uranium vial from my belt and handed it to the Director. He immediately went to the black car that was parked right there at the airfield and handed the ampoule to the car. — And who was there? I then asked the Director. "This is Beria," whispered the Director. Four days later, a message appeared that Beria had

become a marshal. There was no limit to the indignation of the front-line soldiers, but everyone protested

whisper."

Well, ordinary soldiers, I think, didn't care who Stalin decided to promote to marshals - Zhukov, Beria or Meretskov, whom, like Vannikov, Lavrenty Pavlovich interrogated "with passion" in the summer of 41st. And the generals and marshals were really offended that

generals wear the same uniform as them, and now here is the marshal of the punitive department, who did not sniff gunpowder.

The main information on the atomic bomb came from the talented German physicist Klaus Fuchs, who adhered to leftist beliefs and worked for Moscow for ideological reasons. Fuchs handed over the scheme of the American atomic device, which was carefully copied by Soviet scientists. Stalin categorically forbade them to engage in any amateur performances here, otherwise it would not suddenly explode. Fuchs also passed on many of his own designs for the hydrogen bomb, which Soviet scientists were able to bring to life even faster than their American counterparts. Beria also had other agents in the American nuclear center at Los Alamos, for example, mechanic David Greenglass, who worked with the famous Soviet resident and his brother-in-law Julius Rosenberg. Later, Julius was made the main scapegoat for leaking American nuclear secrets and, along with his wife Ethel, was executed in the electric chair. There were also unknown soldiers of that great battle for the Soviet Union.

nuclear weapons, the truth about which comes to light only in recent years. Here in 1992, the former KGB archivist Vasily Mitrokhin emigrated to England, who secretly hated the Soviet system and accumulated secret material ahead of time (which he secretly took out of work either in boots or in socks). Seven years had passed by the time British agents found the caches at Mitrokhin's dacha and forwarded them by diplomatic post from Moscow to London, while counterintelligence sorted out the Mitrokhin collection. And only in 1999 did the British and world public learn that a certain Melita Norwood, who in 1999, when the revelation followed, was 87 years old, in the 40s, being the secretary of the head of the English nuclear project, handed over to Soviet intelligence invaluable information about the atomic bomb .

Obviously, Lavrenty Pavlovich was greatly impressed by the data that "the first experimental" combat "explosion is expected in 2-3 months." He appreciated the importance of the most powerful weapon at that time, which was about to be born. Having headed the project to create an atomic bomb, he immediately became the most influential member of the government, the most necessary minister for Stalin. Since the early 1930s, after

defeat of all and all oppositions, the center of power from the Politburo actually moved to the Council of People's Commissars, whose members controlled some of the most important sectors of the economy and law enforcement agencies. Of course, there was no talk of any opposition to Stalin, but there was a hidden struggle between members of the leadership over the degree of closeness to the dictator. Previously, the nuclear project was supervised by Molotov, but there were no practical progress in this matter, with the exception of intelligence gathering, until February 45th. Now Lavrenty Pavlovich decided to go on stage, where serious atomic passions were soon to flare up. Immediately after the surrender of Germany, Beria's deputy, Lieutenant General A.P. Zavenyagin went to Berlin to look for German physicists involved in the German uranium project. A specialist in the diffusion separation of isotopes, Nobel laureate Gustav Hertz, a designer of electron-optical devices Manfred von Ardenne, a specialist in uranium metallurgy Nikolai Riehl (he was later awarded the title of Hero of Socialist Labor), and others were voluntarily delivered to the USSR on a voluntary basis. the creation of the Soviet atomic bomb, in particular, by designing an ultra-high-speed centrifuge for separating uranium isotopes. Then there was the atomic bombing of

Hiroshima and Nagasaki, which finally forced Stalin to recognize the creation of nuclear weapons as the main priority of the Soviet state. As Ya.P. Terletsky, Stalin reacted to this event very nervously: "It turns out that after the explosion of the atomic bomb in Hiroshima, Stalin staged a grandiose dressing, for the first time during the war he lost his temper: he pounded his fists, stamped his feet. After all, the dream of spreading the socialist revolution to the whole of Europe was crumbling, a dream that seemed so close to being realized after the capitulation of Germany and, as it were, crossed out by the negligence of our nuclear scientists, led by Kurchatov. As Yakov Petrovich testifies, the experiments and conclusions of Kurchatov and his team were a repetition of American and British developments obtained with the help of Department C: "At the same time, theorists were amazed at the incredible intuition of Kurchatov, who, not being a theoretician, accurately "predicted" their final result. This hardly causes delight among those who, following Igor Nikolayevich Golovin, created a naive myth about a super-genius

physics, which allegedly determined all the main directions of the atomic problem, which allegedly combined in its person the genius of Fermi, the talents of Bethe, Szilard, Wigner, Oppenheimer and many others.

As a result, on August 20, 1945, on the initiative of Lavrenty Pavlovich, a Special Committee was formed by a decree of the State Defense Committee. He was entrusted with "management of all work on the use of intra-atomic energy of uranium: the development of research work in this area; wide deployment of geological prospecting and the creation of a raw material base of the USSR for the extraction of uranium, as well as the use of uranium deposits outside the USSR (in Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia and other countries); organization of industry for processing uranium, production of special equipment and materials related to the use of nuclear energy; as well as the construction of nuclear power plants and the development and production of the atomic bomb." Beria was appointed chairman of the Special Committee. On this line, as a member of the Special Committee, even G.M. Malenkov, the second person in the party leadership after Stalin. Stalin spared neither money nor people for the

atomic project. For him at that moment it was the main task, comparable in importance only with the victory over Germany. But the demand from the participants, Lavrenty Pavlovich understood this well, would be special. If you can't make a bomb quickly, heads will roll, and him first. They will declare an American or even Turkish spy, a conspirator, deliberately delaying the creation of nuclear weapons so much needed by the USSR - and welcome to the next world after Heinrich Yagoda and Nikolai Yezhov. Lavrenty Pavlovich succeeded, primarily thanks to

the achievements of the Soviet scientific and technical intelligence, which at that time was subordinate to him personally. After all, the 13th paragraph of the resolution on the Special Committee read: "Instruct comrade. Beria to take measures to organize overseas intelligence work to obtain more complete technical and economic information about the uranium industry and atomic bombs, entrusting him with the leadership of all intelligence work in this area carried out by the intelligence agencies (NKGB, RUKA (Intelligence Directorate of the Red Army is a good abbreviation! - **B. S.**) and others). By the same decision,

At the suggestion of Lavrenty Pavlovich, the First Main Directorate was created, which practically coordinated the activities of various departments participating in the atomic project, and was controlled only by the Special Committee. Soon, the Second Main Directorate appeared, which was engaged in the development and production of rocket weapons - the future means of delivering atomic and hydrogen charges. His activities were also supervised by Beria. The

resolution on the creation of the PGU specifically emphasized: "No organizations, institutions and persons, without special permission from the State Defense Committee, have the right to interfere in the administrative, economic and operational activities of the First Directorate, its enterprises and institutions, or to demand information about its work or work carried out on orders from the First Main Directorate. All reporting on the specified work is sent only to the Special Committee under the State

Defense Committee. The head of the Special Committee, Beria recommended the then People's Commissar of Ammunition, Colonel-General BL. Vannikov, whom he himself interrogated in 1941 in the "Aviator Case". Boris Lvovich confessed to everything, although he was not guilty of anything. But, unlike Stern, Smushkevich, Loktionov and other generals who were waiting for a bullet in the Kuibyshev basement, Vannikov survived. Stalin decided that such a valuable specialist would still be useful. Vannikov was released, and he successfully worked throughout the war as Deputy People's Commissar of Armaments, and then - People's Commissar of Ammunition. Beria for Boris Lvovich forever remained a man who almost sent him to the next world. The general understood that the slightest oversight could lead to consequences much worse than in the 41st, and he obeyed the requirements of Lavrenty Pavlovich unquestioningly. True, whenever possible, he tried to shift the responsibility to others. According to the recollections of the participants in the atomic project, Boris Lvovich often fell ill before important tests. And he had no idea to intrigue against Lavrenty Pavlovich.

Something, but Beria knew how to select personnel. Nuclear facilities were built by prisoners and soldiers, whose position differed little from that of prisoners. The fighters of the construction units were recruited mainly from former prisoners and residents of the occupied territories. Under

second-class, whose life was worth almost nothing. During the war years, conscripts from the occupied territories were thrown unarmed into frontal fighter attacks on German positions. After the war, the survivors had to participate in a frontal attack on another front - the Soviet atomic project. One of the survivors, V. Vyshemirsky, recalled the construction of a radiochemical plant near Kyshtym (Chelyabinsk-40) in the Urals (the current NPO Mayak): "We lived at a construction site and in the open air, and in tents, and in dugouts, although in winter frosts reached forty degrees. They burned the frozen ground with fires, and chiselled the rocky ground with picks. We were fed with frozen potatoes and cabbage. To get an extra ration - an extra scoop of gruel and a hundred grams of bread - you need to exceed the norm, which was unbearable to overpower. The conditions were not much different from those in the camps; there were also suicides among the soldiers." Another survivor, A. Osipov, testifies: "People died in dozens, hundreds - from malnutrition and hard, exhausting labor." And here is how the former soldier of the

construction battalion A. Kharitonov describes the conditions at the Kyshtym construction site: "We lived there in dugouts, which included a whole company (one dugout. - **B.S.**). They worked for 11 hours - from 8 am to 7 pm. Once

a lot of generals arrived - all so beautiful and pot-bellied. I thought: what do they eat if they are so pot-bellied? (I wonder if among those generals there was Lavrenty Pavlovich, who also had a fair belly? -

B.S.). We were always hungry, there

was not enough food, the second norm was not designed for this hard labor, sometimes after work we simply fell.

Since 1949, the chimney of our facility began to smoke, the forest around became dead. The next year we were demobilized, but not released, only a year later I escaped from this hell. Few of ours survived, maybe the government will at least remember them? But the government, neither then nor now, remembers either the living or the dead. It just so happened in Russia that everything new, starting with the imperial capital of St. Petersburg, was built on bones.

N. Lapygin, an officer who worked on the construction of Chelyabinsk-40, is surprised at how low the mechanization of work was:

"I was struck by the saturation of the primitive labor force at the construction site - if, according to the norms, a foreman is supposed to lead fifty workers, then there were two hundred or more. People were overtaken by a mass in order to take them by numbers, and not by skill. After all, the technical equipment was poor - no lifting equipment, no earthmoving machines, everything was done by hand with little use of small-scale mechanization.

The buckets were manually loaded with heavy rock soil left over from the big explosion to form a pit for the reactor. Formwork was made by hand and filled with thousands of cubic meters of concrete. The thickness of the walls was huge - to protect against radiation. The money was spent on anything but to ease

and mechanize soldier labor.

However, once a terrible amount of equipment appeared at object "A" - where did they just catch up with it? To my amazement, bulldozers and graders began to fill up trenches into which they had not yet finished laying communications - it turns out that Beria arrived, and the lackeys did their best for him.

On another occasion, I was ordered to build a tent overnight out of prefabricated elements and upholstered in silk. The companies of soldiers and the crane operator Tanya did not spare. By five in the morning the tent was standing, and at six

Kurchatov

arrived there and asked me: - Aren't

you tired? - Front-line soldiers

endure everything. — Yes, this is the second war for you. And it also

happened: on the RAM, the installers said that they were running out of stainless bolts. The former deputy minister immediately calls Moscow and tells the manufacturer to send a car with bolts to the airport to load it onto the plane.

And in the morning the car went from us to the Chelyabinsk airport. The bolts arrived on time

"golden".

I think that Lavrenty Pavlovich at that time noticed bullshit with technology - he had a trained eye. And the "golden bolts" did not please him - Beria's practical mind must have resisted such an irrational waste of scarce aviation gasoline. Yes, and hard labor, as the chairman of the Special Committee understood, is too inefficient and, in fact, has a significant impact on the timing of the completion of the nuclear

does not provide a project. The timing was determined primarily by the success of intelligence and the brains of scientists. The realization of this led Beria after the death of Stalin to the idea of a broad amnesty, which almost halved the population of the Gulag. The work of prisoners in the atomic era became unnecessary.

They spared no money, they did not think about saving. According to the memoirs of V. Filippov, deputy director of the Kyshtym plant, for excessive concern for production efficiency, the head of the PGU Vannikov threatened his subordinates with the same punishments that he himself had once been threatened in the NKVD: "Vannikov left the office to the table, took off his jacket and carefully hung it on a chair. He took out a pistol from his back pocket and laid it on the table. Opening the meeting, he proclaimed: "Well, fucking mother, report!" He led the RAM assertively, with great arrogance, he was not shy in expressions. I "reported" first. One day I reported that due to design changes, the production of tanks was

delayed. Vannikov immediately interrupted me: "When I was People's Commissar for Armaments and my chief engineer changed his mind to a more economical one, I ordered him to be shot."

For breaking the schedule, Vannikov simply told the senior fitter Naft, taking a cartridge with a bullet out of the clip: "For this, it's a pity to spend even a small piece of lead on you." Well, with whom you will lead, from that you

will type. Lavrenty Pavlovich himself, too, could screw in

a strong word, and threaten to put it up against the wall. However, he understood that executions and repressions would not help in this case. If you withdraw the same I.V. Kurchatov and Yu.B. Khariton, who will make the bomb?

The same Julius Borisovich Khariton, the father of the Soviet atomic bomb, recalled Beria in general not bad: "Beria, I must say, acted on a grand scale, energetically, assertively. He often went to objects, sorted it out on the spot, and everything conceived was necessarily brought to end.

Never embarrassed to be rude and insult a person, Beria was tolerant with us and, it's hard to even say, extremely polite (I wonder how then the respected academician knew about Beria's rudeness if Lavrenty Pavlovich himself never said a rude word to him? Maybe rudeness and Beria's boorishness is a myth born after the fall

"Lubyansk Marshal" in the 53rd? So Sergo Beria claims that in his presence his father never cursed anyone; however, under his son, Lavrenty Pavlovich could refrain from non-parliamentary expressions. - **B.S.).** If the interests of the cause demanded to go into conflict with any ideological moments, he, without hesitation, went into such a conflict. If Molotov had been our curator, such impressive successes, of course, would not have happened.

Kurchatov's deputy professor I.V. agrees with him. Golovin, who in his memoirs is generally inclined to represent Lavrenty Pavlovich as a demonic villain, repeats the myths existing around his name and in every possible way belittles the contribution of the former NKVD chief to the creation of the Soviet atomic bomb: "Beria was an excellent organizer - energetic and corrosive. If, for example, he took papers for the night, then by morning the documents would be returned with reasonable remarks and sensible suggestions. He was well versed in people, he checked everything personally and it was impossible to hide mistakes from him. impossible".

With scientists, Lavrenty Pavlovich was polite and helpful. On the other hand, the officers and generals of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and state security who were in charge of organizing the work could sometimes be intimidated (it was much easier to replace these). Academician A.D. Sakharov recalled how once Beria reprimanded General of State Security I.E. Pavlov, who negligently disrupted the production of an important component of the hydrogen bomb: "We, the Bolsheviks, when we want to do something, turn a blind eye to everything else (saying this, Beria closed his eyes, and his face became even more terrible). You, Pavlov, have lost your Bolshevik sharpness! Now we will not punish you, we hope that you will correct the mistake. But keep in mind, we have a lot of space in the

turma!" And then came the long-awaited day of the first tests of the Soviet atomic bomb - August 29, 1949. The explosion occurred at a training ground near Semipalatinsk. This is how Khariton remembered this day: "The bomb was lifted to the tower by an elevator, they wanted to deliver people there separately, but Zernov could not stand it, stood next to the bomb, and so the two of them climbed the tower, then Shchelkin and Lominsky arrived there. They were last.

On their way there was a device to which it was necessary to connect the wires that transmitted the signal to trigger the bomb - there was such

an automatic machine that included a device for undermining initiators located along the periphery of the charge, so that a converging wave was formed. The button of this device was pressed by Shchelkin, then everything was done automatically - capacitors were charged, in which the energy of undermining the initiators was accumulated, detonators were fired, etc. And from this moment the button was pressed until the explosion itself, forty seconds passed, I remember.

Well, after these forty seconds everything was lit up with the brightest flash. We observed it through the open (from the back side) door of the observation post, located ten kilometers from the epicenter. And thirty seconds after the flash, the shock wave came and it was possible to go outside and observe the subsequent phases of the explosion. Beria was also

with us, he kissed Igor Vasilyevich (Kurchatov. - **B.S.**) and me - on the forehead (Lavrenty Pavlovich understood that failure - and there was a 5-6% chance that the device would not explode - could immediately make him, Khariton and Kurchatov "enemies of the people" with all the ensuing consequences. - **B. S.**). The brightest light and powerful shock wave were the best evidence that the power of the explosion was quite sufficient.

However, in the "memoirs" of some people who were not there at all, such details are described that you simply wonder. For example, it is written that in the last seconds the neutron flux suddenly began to increase (this increased the likelihood that an explosion would not occur. - **B.S.**), and everyone became worried. There really was a neutron counter, and it transmitted signals to the OP, but there was no flow enhancement. These are all fabrications, like many other "details" of those events."

Khariton clearly had in mind the "memories" of Golovin, who was not present at the tests, but who described everything that had happened in much more detail than Yuliy Borisovich, as much as on seven pages of a book text. By principle - everything that was not with me, I remember. Here I will cite only those fragments of Golovin's "memoirs" that are directly related to Beria, so that readers can trace how the myth of Lavrenty Pavlovich was constructed - a villain and a fool who did not understand anything in the task assigned, and who ended up on a horse only thanks to the heroes-scientists and to their sensible deputies from the military

industrial complex, which were lucky enough to survive after the 53rd year:
“The cart with the product is slowly rolled out through the gate into the darkness of the night onto the elevator platform.

- So it will go up unaccompanied? Beria exclaims. - No, no, - Zernov takes a step that is not provided for by the work schedule, stands on the elevator platform and, holding on to the crossbar with one hand, leaves in a picturesque pose.

Davydov had already begun counting the minutes when Beria arrived with his entourage. Kurchatov pulled himself together and stopped next to Flerov, observing the background of neutrons. Two or three neutrons in fifteen seconds. Everything is fine.

And suddenly, in the general silence, ten minutes before "one" is heard Beria's voice:

“And nothing will work out for you, Igor Vasilyevich!” -

What are you, Lavrenty Pavlovich! Will definitely work! Kurchatov exclaims and continues to watch, only his neck has turned purple and his face has become gloomily concentrated. In the third minute before the

explosion, the background of neutrons suddenly doubled, in the second minute it became even larger. Flerov and Kurchatov looked at each other anxiously - the danger of a bang instead of an explosion had increased sharply. But the automatic launcher works indifferently, it is impossible to speed up anything, and only Kurchatov has the power to cancel the explosion (in reality, only Beria could take the decision to cancel the explosion, and then only after agreeing it with Stalin in advance. - B.S.) . “Ten seconds,

five seconds, three, two, one, go!” Kurchatov turned sharply to face the open door. The sky has already faded against the backdrop of illuminated hills and steppe. Kurchatov rushed out of the casemate, ran up to the earthen rampart and shouting "She!" waved his arms widely, repeating: “She, she!” and a gleam spread across his face.

The pillar of the explosion swirled and went into the stratosphere. A shock wave was approaching the command post, clearly visible in the grass. Kurchatov rushed towards her. Flerov rushed after him, grabbed him by the arm, forcibly dragged him into the casemate and closed

the door. The rest burst into the casemate - discharged, jubilant. The chairman (Beria. - **B.S.**) hugged and kissed Kurchatov with the words: “It would be a great misfortune if it didn’t work out!” Kurchatov knew well what a misfortune it would be.

But now all worries are over. Kurchatov and his team solved all scientific problems, successfully went through all the difficulties of the organization (it turns out that Lavrenty Pavlovich had nothing to do with the organization of work, Igor Vasilyevich pulled everything on himself? - B.S.). The tension immediately flew off Kurchatov's face. He immediately became soft and as if embarrassed.

But Beria suddenly became worried. Did the Americans have such an explosion? He

immediately ordered that he be put on the phone with Meshcheryakov, who had been sent to observe the explosion at the northern observation post. In 1947, he was invited by the Americans to Bikini and saw an American underwater nuclear explosion there. —

Mikhail Grigoryevich! Does it look like American? Very? We didn't screw up? Kurchatov doesn't rub our glasses? All the same? Fine! Fine! So, you can report to Stalin that the test is successful? Fine! Fine! Beria gave the command

to the embarrassed general, who was on duty at the telephone, to immediately connect with Stalin on the HF. In Moscow, Poskrebyshev answered the phone.

"Iosif Vissarionovich went to bed," he replied. "Very important, call him anyway. A few minutes later a sleepy voice answered Beria: "What do you want?" - Joseph, everything is fine. The explosion is the same as that of the Americans. "I already know and I want to sleep," Stalin answered and hung up. Beria exploded and pounced on the pale general with his fists: "You are sticking spokes in my wheels here, traitors! I'll grind it to powder! .."

It is easy to see that all the details invented by Golovin and missing in Khariton's story fully correspond to the mythological image of the cruel and suspicious villain that Soviet propaganda portrayed Beria after his fall. Lavrenty Pavlovich is taking completely senseless actions. Just in case, he encourages one of those present to accompany the "product" to the tower, standing in an absurd position on the elevator platform. Although there is no sense in such an escort, only a vain risk for the escort. Then Beria constantly does not trust Kurchatov, is afraid that the test will fail, at the last moment he loses faith in

success. Here, according to the laws of a bad play, there is a real danger of failure due to the growth of the neutron background, so that later success can be felt more weightily. When everything is over, Beria kisses Kurchatov, but this is a Judas kiss, since Lavrenty Pavlovich still doubts - is this a real explosion? Didn't Kurchatov swindle him? In the meantime, Beria is starting a stupid test, Stalin calls on the HF, learns from the general on duty that the bomb has exploded safely and is going to bed. The villain Beria is disgraced: he failed to be the first to report to the Generalissimo about the historical event, and immediately there is no trace of politeness: Lavrenty Pavlovich attacks the innocent general with his fists. This is how the legends about Beria were born, which had very little in common with

reality. After the creation of the atomic bomb, Lavrenty Pavlovich, as head of the Special Committee, continued to lead the hydrogen project. By the end of his life, his marshal's uniform, in addition to the Golden Star of the Hero of Socialist Labor, was decorated with five orders of Lenin, two orders of the Red Banner, the Order of Suvorov 1st degree and three orders of the Red Banner of the union republics - Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan. But the position of Lavrenty Pavlovich at the top in the early 50s was shaken. In 1951, a number of Georgian leaders, previously close to Beria, were arrested, who were accused of creating a "Mingrelian-nationalist group." At the same time, Lavrenty Pavlovich's nephew Teimuraz Shavdia was arrested, who was captured at the beginning of the war, enrolled in the Georgian SS legion, and then deserted from there and fought in the ranks of the French partisans. Shavdia was given 25 years for treason, and his uncle could not help him in any way. But Stalin did not touch Beria - he was needed as the chief overseer of the thermonuclear project. That's when the epic with the hydrogen bomb will be successfully completed, then it's time to remember that we have no irreplaceable. Lavrenty Pavlovich felt it. According to Sergo Beria, his father told him in 1951: "Stalin has decided to arrest me and is just waiting for work on

the hydrogen bomb to be completed." The father of the Soviet hydrogen bomb, Andrei Dmitrievich Sakharov, recalled his first face-to-face meeting with Beria in 1950 while working on the hydrogen project: "He got up, making it clear that the conversation was over, but suddenly said: "Maybe you do you have any questions for me?"

I was completely unprepared for such a general question. Spontaneously, without thinking, I asked: "Why are our new developments going so slowly? Why are we always lagging behind the US and other countries, losing the technical competition?"

Beria answered me pragmatically: "Because we do not have a production and experimental base. Everything hangs on one "Elektrosila". And the Americans have hundreds of firms with a strong base." (Lavrenty Pavlovich towards the end of his life began to understand what strength lies in the inherent competition of many industrial firms and scientific teams inherent in capitalism. -

B.S.) He shook my hand. She was plump, slightly damp and deathly cold. Only at that moment did I seem to realize that I was talking face to face with a terrible person. Until then, it hadn't occurred to me, and I kept myself completely free. I suspect

that the academician, like the vast majority of Soviet citizens, began to consider Beria a terrible person only after the 53rd year. That is why it seemed to Andrei Dmitrievich at the time when he was working on his memoirs that the interlocutor's hand was cold, like the devil's.

In March 1953, when preparations for testing the Soviet hydrogen bomb entered the final stage, Stalin died suddenly. For a short time, a collective leadership came to the country as part of Stalin's formal successor G.M. Malenkov, who became chairman of the Council of Ministers, N.S. Khrushchev, who headed the work of the secretariat of the Central Committee, and two first deputy prime ministers - V.M. Molotov, who also took the post of Minister of Foreign Affairs, and L.P. Beria, who headed the Ministry of Internal Affairs, which absorbed the MGB. Beria and Malenkov previously had friendly relations. In the first months after Stalin's death, their bloc opposed the bloc of the other two members of the ruling four, Khrushchev and Molotov. Beria, with the help of Malenkov, managed to rehabilitate those convicted in the "doctors' case", in the case of sabotage in the aviation industry in the 46th year, in the case of employees of the Main Artillery Directorate in the 51st. All these cases were once inspired by the opponents of Malenkov and Beria. In a note offering to rehabilitate Air Chief Marshal A.A. Novikova, A.N. Shakhurin and other leaders of the aviation

industry, Beria pointed out that statements were beaten out from those arrested, in which an attempt was made to "slander Comrade. Malenkov. The brother of Lazar Moiseevich Kaganovich Mikhail, the former people's commissar of the aviation industry, who committed suicide after being accused of plotting to establish a fascist government in the USSR, was also rehabilitated! Lavrenty Pavlovich also offered to rehabilitate the members of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee. He established that the famous director Solomon Mikhoels did not die under the wheels of a truck in Minsk in 1948, but was killed by MGB officers on the orders of then minister state security V.S. Abakumov, a who undoubtedly acted on behalf of Stalin. Beria proposed to the Presidium of the Central Committee (as the Politburo was then called) to deprive the participants in the murder of the orders received for this crime and put them on trial. The head of the Ministry of Internal Affairs arrested his former protege L.F. Tsanavu, who, as the Minister of State Security of Belarus, directly organized the assassination attempt on Mikhoels. Already after the fall of Beria, the Presidium limited itself to taking the orders from the killers. Tsanava died during the investigation, which accused

him of participating in Beria's conspiracy! Lavrenty Pavlovich proposed a broad amnesty for prisoners. This proposal was accepted by the Presidium of the Central Committee. On March 27, 1953, a decree was issued, signed by the Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR K.E. Voroshilov, therefore, among the people, the amnesty of the 53rd year was called "Voroshilov". Of the 2,526,402 prisoners and persons under investigation who were at that time in prisons and camps, 1,181,264 people who did not pose a particular public danger were to be released. They included persons sentenced to a term of 5 years or less, sentenced to a longer term for official, economic and military crimes, elderly and sick prisoners, pregnant women and women with children under the age of 10, as well as minors. Beria proposed an even broader amnesty that would have affected most political prisoners (they usually had a term of at least 8 years), but colleagues on the Presidium of the Central Committee did not support him. At the same time, Lavrenty Pavlovich achieved the abolition of restrictions on registration in most cities and border areas. In addition to the closed military-industrial cities, Moscow,

Leningrad, Vladivostok, Sevastopol and Kronstadt. This was done so that the amnestied returned to their homes and could more easily adapt to life in the wild. Beria emphasized: "The established restrictions on free movement and residence on the territory of the USSR cause fair criticism from citizens. It should be noted that such a practice of passport restrictions does not exist in any country. In many capitalist countries - the USA, England, Canada, Finland and Sweden - the population does not have passports at all, and no marks are made on the criminal record in the personal documents of citizens. Of course, being in prison does not make anyone better, and many harmless bytoviki or those convicted under the infamous "seven-eight"

law (dated August 7, 1932) for picking up collective-farm spikelets acquired quite criminal inclinations in the camps. And Beria had to respond to complaints from the localities about the atrocities of the amnestied. So, on May 21, 1953, he wrote to the Department of Internal Affairs of the Krasnodar Territory: "There are many cases of banditry, theft and other criminal manifestations in the city of Kropotkin, as a result of which local residents are afraid to walk around the city at a later time. Take the necessary measures to strengthen the fight against criminal crime and the protection of public order in the city of Kropotkin. Report the results."

The new old chief of the Ministry of Internal Affairs had long understood the inefficiency of forced labor by prisoners and tried to unload the Gulag. New complex types of weapons required skilled labor. Simultaneously with the amnesty, on March 21, Beria sent a proposal to close more than 20 large construction sites, which mainly employed prisoners. Work was stopped on the Main Turkmen Canal, the Volga-Ural Canal, on the hydroelectric facilities on the Lower Don, the Chum-Salekhard-Igarka and BAM railways, etc. All these projects were economically inefficient and harmful to the local

ecology.

But Lavrenty Pavlovich was plotting even more global reforms. Fearing that centrifugal tendencies could destroy the Soviet Union in the long run, he offered to at least partially satisfy the national feelings of the inhabitants of the republics. As conceived by Beria, the leaders of the Communist parties and the main departments

were supposed to be representatives of the indigenous nationality. It was supposed to form national armies, establish national orders (for example, in Georgia - Shota Rustaveli, in Ukraine - Taras Shevchenko, etc.), translate office work into national languages, and pay more attention to the national intelligentsia. The experience of the war convinced Lavrenty Pavlovich that not all Soviet peoples were ready to go into battle "for the Motherland, for Stalin!" His son, who visited Western Ukraine, confirmed that the inhabitants of the newly annexed territories are by no means happy with their entry into the "family of fraternal peoples." Sergo Lavrentievich recalled: "It was there (in Ukraine. - **B.S.**) that I learned what an insurgent movement was in our rear. Cruelty breeds cruelty. I remember how one of the detachments of nationalists stormed the frontier post, where their people were detained. When the Soviet unit arrived to the rescue, there was already no one to save - all the personnel were cut out. When the front went west, our soldiers were dressed up to fight the insurgents and such units were passed off as Bandera detachments. The captured insurgents made a very strong impression on me. Many of them were my peers. Competent, self-righteous young people. Often there were students among them. When I told my father about what he saw in Western Ukraine, he reacted like this: "Why are you surprised? These people are fighting for an independent Ukraine. And it was the same in Georgia, and it can be in any other place. Don't take their weapons to your side

call."

Lavrenty Pavlovich hoped to lure peoples with the opportunity to preserve and develop national languages and cultures, serve in the national army, obey fellow tribesmen, and not people sent from Moscow. He hoped to attract the national elites to the side of the center, giving them real power in the republics. After all, until 1953, in the republics of Central Asia, in the Baltic states and Belarus, Russians sharply prevailed in all more or less significant administrative posts, up to the district police officers. And in the rest of the republics, their share in leadership positions was significantly higher than the share of Russians in the population of the respective territories.

Beria also tried to achieve some relaxation in international affairs. He recommended normalizing relations with the Yugoslav leadership headed by Josip Broz Tito and seeking the unification of Germany as a bourgeois but neutral state. However, all his initiatives were doomed to failure.

First of all, the party apparatus rebelled against the personnel changes planned by Lavrenty Pavlovich in the leadership of the republics. At the Plenum of the Central Committee of the CPSU at the beginning of July 53, when the participants boldly branded the already arrested Beria, the head of the Communists of Belarus N.S. Patolichev told a terrible story, how the defeated head of the Ministry of Internal Affairs tried to undermine the age-old friendship of the Russian and Belarusian peoples: "It was a real sabotage by Beria. For the first time in the history of our multinational state, experienced party, Soviet cadres, devoted to our party, are removed from their posts just because they are Russians.

Head of the Mogilev Regional Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs comrade. The venerable has been working in Belarus almost all his life and has been working as a Chekist for at least 20 years. Tov. The venerable was removed by Beria only

because he is Russian. Beria, in one fell swoop, without the knowledge of the party organs, and in Belarus without the knowledge of the Central Committee of Belarus, removed Russians, Ukrainians from leading positions, starting from the Minister of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Belarus, the entire leadership of the ministry and regional departments. A replacement was also being prepared, up to and including the district police officer ... Beria expelled from the Cheka all party workers sent by the party to the bodies to strengthen them ...

Once the Minister of the Interior, Comrade Baskakov, was in the office of the First Secretary of the Central Committee. Beria called him and said: "Where are you?" - "In the Central Committee, at the first secretary." - "Go to your place, call." Comrade Baskakov reported to me. what he was told, went, called. He was instructed to collect data on the national composition of party, Soviet and Chekist bodies, without reporting this to the Central Committee of Belarus. But Comrade Baskakov immediately reported to the Central Committee. He refused to write a note, then he was summoned to the ministry in Moscow and forced to write, and then they drove him out as unfit.

I want to say, comrades, that Beria, not only in the party, among the people, but he did not have and could not have support in the organs either.

Right, right was Nikolai Semenovich. Beria could not count on support not only in the party, but also in his own department (the people did not care about him or his opponents - people could no longer express their opinion and influence the authorities for a long time). Abakumov managed to plant his people there, and many of Beria's former nominees, like Tsanava, managed to defect to the side of Viktor Semenovich and sat in their places even after the fall of Abakumov. Then the staff of the MGB was replenished with the people of the new minister, the party worker S.D. Ignatiev. Both deputies of Beria, S.N. Kruglov and I.A. Serov, could not be considered his unconditional supporters. Sergei Nikiforovich gravitated more towards Malenkov, and Ivan Aleksandrovich towards Khrushchev, with whom he worked well in Ukraine. So, Lavrenty Pavlovich could not use the united Ministry of Internal Affairs as a tool to seize power in 1953. But it seems that he did not particularly strive to have personally loyal people at the head of the internal affairs bodies and party organizations in the field. After all, the mechanical replacement of personnel on a national basis, undertaken by him, did not at all guarantee the loyalty of Beria on the part of the new nominees. In addition, in those republics where the Russian and Russified elite were numerous and rallied into a single clan, the Beria reform began to stall even before the fall of its creator. Warned by Baskakov, Patolichev managed to carry out relevant work with local leaders, and as a result, the Plenum of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Belarus refused to change Nikolai Semenovich for the Belarusian M.V. recommended by Moscow. Zimyanin. The latter was not at all close to Beria and successfully continued his party career after the execution of the Lubyanka Marshal. It's just that Mikhail Vasilievich was the first member of the Presidium who came to hand, a high-ranking nomenklatura of Belarusian nationality - after all, the second secretary of the Belarusian Communist Party. Maybe just a misfire in Belarus became an important impetus for the formation of an anti-Beria conspiracy in the country's leadership.

Of course, the idea of fighting against the strongest Russification of the party state apparatus in the Union republics with the help of peculiar "percentage norms" has nothing to do with democracy.

It has. But Beria did not seem to be going to build a democratic state in the USSR according to the Western model. He simply understood very well that Russification, which was imposed from above by a purely administrative way, could only be got rid of by equally rude, administrative methods. In the absence of democracy, this is the only way. Just as dangerous for the

overwhelming majority of the nomenklatura was Lavrenty Pavlovich's proposal for the unification of Germany. At the July Plenum, Molotov was indignant: "During the discussion of the German question in the Presidium of the Council of Ministers, it was revealed that Beria stands on positions completely alien to our party. He then spoke of the fact that there was no point in building socialism in East Germany, that it was enough that West and East Germany united as a bourgeois peace-loving state. These speeches by Beria could not pass by our attention. For us, as Marxists, it was and remains clear that under the conditions of the present existing situation, i. means a de facto transition to positions alien of the Presidium of the Council of Ministers submitted by Beria on this issue, it was proposed to recognize "the course towards the construction of socialism pursued in the German Democratic Republic as erroneous in the current conditions." In this regard, it was proposed "to abandon at the present time the course of building socialism in the GDR." We, of course, could not accept this. It became clear that Beria was not on communist positions. In this situation, we felt that in the person of Beria we have a man who has nothing in common with our party, that he is a man of the bourgeois camp, that he is an enemy of the Soviet Union.

The capitulatory meaning of Beria's proposals on the German question is obvious. In fact, he demanded capitulation to the so-called "Western" bourgeois states. It became clear to us that this was a stranger, that this was a man of the anti-Soviet camp. (Voices: "That's right! ..").

Malenkov echoed Molotov: "It must be said that Beria, when discussing the German question, proposed not to direct the course towards the forced construction of socialism, but to abandon any course towards socialism in the GDR and head towards bourgeois Germany. In the light of everything that we have now learned about Beria, we must re-evaluate this point of view of his. It is clear that this fact characterizes him as a bourgeois degenerate. The presidium decided to remove Beria from his posts and expel him from the party. The Presidium came to the conclusion that it was impossible to stop halfway with such an adventurer and decided to arrest Beria as an enemy of the party and people. (Voices: "That's right!" Stormy applause.)

The comrades-in-arms of Lenin and Stalin were not accustomed to cede a single inch of the land where the foot of the Soviet soldier set foot. The only notable exception is the 1946 withdrawal of the occupying forces from northern Iran, and that was only because of the fear of the American bomb. The withdrawal of the Soviet Army from East Germany and consent to the restoration of capitalism there meant not only a step towards the end of the Cold War and the rejection of the spread of socialism to Western Europe on the bayonets of Soviet soldiers, but also an implicit recognition of the advantages of the bourgeois system over the socialist one. Since it did not work out in such an industrially developed and, according to Marx, country as fully ripe for socialism as Germany, then something must be wrong with the Marxist-Leninist Stalinist theory itself. Beria seems to have understood this, but for Malenkov, Khrushchev, Molotov, Voroshilov, Mikoyan, Kaganovich and others, such a recognition was like death. They simply did not think of life for themselves in another social system, not seeing a worthy place for themselves there. Lavrenty Pavlovich was doomed.

After the fact, both Khrushchev and Malenkov each attributed to themselves a leading role in the arrest of Beria. The logic of events suggests that Nikita Sergeevich is closer to the truth here. Still, of all the members of the Presidium of the Central Committee, Georgy Maximilianovich was the closest to Beria, and it would not be reasonable for him to be the first to propose to withdraw "dear friend George" to the expense. Therefore, let's listen to Khrushchev's story about how the arrest of Beria was being prepared: "Our duty with Bulganin has come (at the bedside of the sick Stalin. - **B.S.**). I was more frank with Bulganin than than wi

the most intimate thoughts and said: "Nikolai Alexandrovich, apparently, now we are in such a position that Stalin will soon die. He obviously won't survive. And the doctors say he won't survive. Do you know what post Beria planned for himself? - "Which?" "He wants the post of Minister of State Security. We cannot possibly allow this. If Beria gets state security, this will be the beginning of our end. He will take this post in order to destroy us all. And he will do it!

Bulganin said he agreed with me. And we began to discuss how we would act. I told him: "I will talk to Malenkov. I think that Malenkov is of the same opinion, he must understand everything. Something must be done, otherwise it will be a catastrophe for the party."

As soon as Stalin died, Beria immediately got into his car and sped off to Moscow from the "near dacha". We decided to call all the members of the Bureau there, or, if possible, all the members of the Presidium of the Central Committee of the Party. I do not remember exactly. While they were driving, Malenkov paced the room, agitated. I decided to talk to him: "Yegor," I say, "I need to talk to you." - "About what?" he asked coldly. "Stalin is dead. How will we continue to live? "What can I say now? Everyone will come and we will talk. That's what we're going for." It would seem that the democratic answer. But I understood it differently, I understood it in such a way that all the questions had long been discussed by him and Beria, everything had long been discussed. "Well, okay," I answer, "we'll talk later."

Here everyone is gathered. They saw that Stalin was dead. And so the distribution of "portfolios" began. Beria proposed to appoint Malenkov Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the USSR with his release from the duties of secretary of the Central Committee of the party. Malenkov proposed to approve Beria as his first deputy and merge the two ministries, state security and internal affairs, into one Ministry of Internal Affairs, and appoint Beria as minister. I was silent. Bulganin was also silent. Here I was worried that Bulganin would not jump out at the wrong time, because it would be wrong to give himself away in advance. After all, I saw the mood of the others. If Bulganin and I had said that we were against it, we would have been accused by a majority of votes that we were squabblers, disorganizers, and even with a warm corpse, we started a fight in the party for posts. Yes, everything went in the same direction as I expected.

Molotov was also appointed first deputy of the Council of Ministers, Kaganovich - deputy. Voroshilov was proposed to be elected Chairman of the Presidium

Supreme Soviet of the USSR, releasing Shvernik from this post. Beria expressed himself very disrespectfully towards Shvernik: he said that no one in the country knows him at all (the holy true truth. - **B.S.**). I saw that here are the details of Beria's plan, who wants to make Voroshilov a man who draws up in decrees what Beria will do when his meat grinder starts working. Beria suggested that I be relieved of my duties as secretary of the Moscow Party Committee. We also made other appointments. They adopted the procedure for the funeral and the procedure for notifying the people of Stalin's death. So we, his heirs, began independent activities in the management of the USSR.

In fact, Nikita Sergeevich admitted that even in the last hours of Stalin's life, he agreed with Bulganin to try to remove Beria from the country's leadership. But this required the consent of Malenkov. Grigory Maximilianovich, at that moment, painfully hesitated: whether to try to get rid of Khrushchev together with Beria or, having made an alliance with Nikita Sergeevich, first defeat the all-powerful chairman of the Special Committee, so that later, in alliance with Molotov, remove Khrushchev himself from the collective leadership. On the historic day of March 5, Malenkov was still inclined towards the first option, which is why he did not speak very warmly with the head of the Moscow party organization. But very soon Georgy Maximilianovich had to drastically change his position. The fact is that Beria did not show much desire to fight against any of the "heirs of Stalin." Lavrenty Pavlovich most beneficial was the preservation of the ruling four, where there was a certain system of "checks and balances" and no one had full power, "Lubyansk Marshal" understood that he could not take the position that Stalin occupied. For this, Lavrenty Pavlovich had neither the authority of the "great helmsman" nor a suitable apparatus at hand. The special committee acted mainly through PSU and VSU, which were also not powerful bureaucratic structures, but gave instructions to various ministries and departments. The assignments of the Special Committee to the leaders of local party organizations went through Malenkov. Only in alliance with him could Beria hope to carry out his reformist plans, and even then only if friend George remained at the head of the Council of Ministers. The marshal had just received the apparatus of the Ministry of Internal Affairs at his disposal, and he needed time to

at least put a few of your people in the center here. Therefore, Lavrenty Pavlovich sought to establish good relations with all members of the Presidium of the Central Committee, including Khrushchev.

Let us again give the floor to "dear Nikita Sergeevich": "During Stalin's funeral and after them, Beria showed me great attention, showed his respect. I was surprised by this. He did not at all break off his demonstratively friendly ties with Malenkov, but suddenly he began to establish friendly relations with me as well. Nikita

Sergeevich friendship with Beria was useless. He was going to throw Lavrenty Pavlovich off the ship of power, in order to send Malenkov into the abyss of disgrace and oblivion. Beria opposed not only Stalin's personality cult, but also the cult of his heirs. The chief of the Ministry of Internal Affairs proposed not to decorate the columns of demonstrators on May 1 and November 7 with portraits of members of the Presidium of the Central Committee and slogans in their honor. At the July Plenum of 1953, Mikoyan said indignantly: "In the first days after the death of Comrade Stalin, he (Beria. - **B.S.**) stood up against the cult of personality." Lavrenty Pavlovich considered the conditions of collective leadership to be the most favorable in order to maintain and strengthen his own

power and influence. Khrushchev characterized Beria's proposals on national and German questions and on the fight against the personality cult of leaders in the following way: "I said to Malenkov more than once: "Can't you see where things are heading? We are headed for disaster. Beria picked up knives for us." Malenkov to me: "Well, what to do? I see, but what should I do? I told him: "We must resist, at least in this form: you see that the questions that Beria raises often have an anti-party orientation. We must not accept them, but object. "You want me to be left alone? But I do not want". "Why do you think that you will be left alone if you start to object? You and I are already two. Bulganin, I am sure, thinks the same way, because I have exchanged opinions with him more than once. Others will also go with us if we object with reason, from party positions. You yourself do not give anyone the opportunity to say a word. As soon as Beria makes a proposal, you immediately rush to support him, declaring: right, the correct proposal, I am "for", who is "against"? And then you vote. And you give the opportunity to speak to others, hold on

yourself, do not jump out and you will see that not one person thinks otherwise. I am convinced that many do not agree with Beria on a number of issues.

Translated from the party language into universal language, this meant a proposal to unite against the overly quick "Lubyansk Marshal". Georgy Maximilianovich had to think hard again. On the one hand, with the removal of Beria, he lost an important ally in the leadership, who controlled one of the two power ministries. This greatly weakened his position in the upcoming struggle for power. However, on the other hand, Beria did not show a desire to move along with Malenkov to a confrontation with Khrushchev, and even more so to use force in this confrontation. On the contrary, he even flirted with Nikita Sergeevich. Malenkov could have suspected that if Khrushchev's proposal was not accepted now, then Nikita Sergeevich would try to conspire with Beria against him, Malenkov. Especially since Khrushchev made it clear: Defense Minister Bulganin was at one with him. In addition, Beria's proposals aroused discontent both among the members of the Presidium of the Central Committee and among local party and Soviet leaders. In the end, Georgy Maximilianovich decided to surrender Beria, hoping in the future to defeat Khrushchev with the help of the "old guard" - Molotov, Kaganovich, Voroshilov, who were in the pen in the last years of Stalin's rule. It is no coincidence that immediately after the death of the dictator, on the initiative of Malenkov, Voroshilov and Kaganovich received important appointments, and Molotov was promoted to First Deputy Chairman of the Council of Ministers. In addition, Malenkov took into account that his man, S.N. Kruglov, remains with Beria as a deputy, and after the fall of Lavrenty Pavlovich, he has every chance to head the Ministry of Internal Affairs. Khrushchev in his memoirs claims that after a conversation with Malenkov, they managed to fail Beria's proposals at the next meeting of the Presidium. There is no documentary evidence for this. It is possible that Nikita

Sergeevich invented this episode so that the actions of him and other members of the Presidium would not look like a simple conspiracy against Beria. Here, they say, at first they criticized Lavrenty Pavlovich for incorrect proposals, and he not only did not come to his senses, but began to prepare a coup. Of course, the scoundrel had to be arrested. In reality, the conspirators, on the contrary,

I had to hide my true feelings for the powerful chief of the Ministry of Internal Affairs until the very last moment.

Having convinced Malenkov, Khrushchev began to persuade other members of the Presidium of the Central Committee to oppose Beria. Here is how he describes this delicate process in his memoirs: "We saw that Beria began to force things. He already felt himself superior to the members of the Presidium, put on airs and even outwardly demonstrated his superiority. We were going through a very dangerous moment. I believed that it was necessary to act urgently, and told Malenkov that it was necessary to talk with other members of the Presidium about this. Apparently, this will not work out at the meeting, and it is necessary to talk face to face with everyone, to find out the opinion on the fundamental issue of attitude towards Beria. Malenkov also agreed: "It's time

I came to Voroshilov in the Supreme Soviet, but I did not get what I had hoped for. As soon as I opened the door and crossed the threshold of his office, he very loudly began to praise Beria: "What a wonderful person we have, Comrade Khrushchev, Lavrenty Pavlovich, what an exceptional person he is!" Nikita Sergeevich decided that it was somehow inconvenient after such words to immediately agitate Voroshilov to quickly remove the "wonderful person" from the leadership, and postponed the conversation until a more appropriate moment. But there was no misfire with Molotov. Vyacheslav Mikhailovich did not favor Lavrenty Pavlovich before, not without reason seeing him as a dangerous competitor (let us recall, for example, the story of the atomic bomb). Therefore, the idea to destroy Beria met with enthusiasm. He just asked what Malenkov thought. Khrushchev reassured him: "I'm talking to you now on behalf of both Malenkov and Bulganin." Then Molotov completely perked up. The other members of the Presidium also did not force themselves to be persuaded for a long time, they only asked the sacramental question: "And how is Malenkov?" Voroshilov agreed after Georgy Maximilianovich spoke to him, just before the meeting of the Presidium of the Council of Ministers, at which Beria was going to be arrested. At the same time, Khrushchev worked on Mikoyan, who, according to Nikita Sergeevich, had "the best relations, they stood up for each other like a mountain." Anastas Ivanovich answered cautiously: "Beria really has negative qualities, but he is not hopeless, he can work as part of a team." Khrushchev decided that the cautious Mikoyan would not be able to interfere with his plans anyway.

Anastas Ivanovich calmly went to the airfield to meet Beria, who had returned from the GDR. Anastas Ivanovich did not warn his old friend about the danger, but repeated the tale learned by heart from the words of Khrushchev and Malenkov that an emergency meeting of the Presidium of the Council of Ministers on German

Affairs was going to be held. The military was brought in to arrest Lavrenty Pavlovich. Subsequently, marshals G.K. Zhukov and K.S. Moskalenko was told in different ways how they took Beria. Each sought to ascribe to himself the main role. Whom to believe? An unexpected confirmation of the correctness of one of the marshals came from Malenkov under circumstances that ruled out insincerity on his part.

When in June 1957 the Plenum of the Central Committee smashed "the anti-party group of Malenkov, Kaganovich, Molotov and Shepilov who joined them," Georgy Maksimilianovich, trying to remind his comrades of his past merits, in particular of his role in organizing the arrest of Beria, said: "Beria was exposed not so easy. At that time we relied on our military comrades in this matter at the most necessary moment, Comrade Moskalenko rendered us a decisive service in this matter. Comrade Khrushchev and I turned to him at a difficult moment, we were without strength and means. At the Plenum, only the lazy did not kick Malenkov. They refuted it at every step and with pleasure. Both Zhukov and Moskalenko were present in the hall, but not one of them this time began to argue with Georgy Maximilianovich. So, Malenkov's statement about the decisive role of Moskalenko in creating a group of generals to arrest the formidable Lavrenty Pavlovich is the holy true truth. And how else to explain why the team that arrested Beria had so many officers and generals from the headquarters of the Moscow Air Defense District, which was headed by Kirill Semenovich. Therefore, we can basically trust Moskalenko's story. I want to quote him: "At 9 o'clock in the morning

(June 25, 1953. - **B.S.**), Khrushchev called me on the Kremlin's automatic telephone exchange, he asked: "There are people close to you in your environment and devoted to our party in the same way as you devoted

to her? .. "After that, Khrushchev told me to take these people with me and come with them to the Kremlin to the chairman of the Council of Ministers of the USSR, Comrade Malenkov, to the office where Stalin used to work."

Khrushchev further hinted in code that they should take weapons with them: "He told me to take air defense plans and maps with me, and also brought cigarettes. I replied that I would take all of the above with me, but I quit smoking during the war, in 1944. Khrushchev laughed and said that cigarettes might not be the ones I have in mind. Then I guessed that I should take a weapon with me. At the end of the conversation, Khrushchev said that he would call Bulganin now. I thought that we had to fulfill some important task of the Presidium of the Central Committee of the CPSU.

Shortly after this, a call came from the Minister of Defense, Marshal Bulganin, who said that Khrushchev called him and suggested that I first come to him, that is, to Bulganin. With my group, I arrived at the Minister of Defense. Comrade Bulganin received me alone. He said that Beria should be arrested. "How many people do you have?" I replied, "There are five people with me." To which he replied: "Very few people. Who do you think can still be attracted, but without delay? I replied: "Your Deputy Marshal Vasilevsky." For some reason, he immediately rejected this candidacy. I asked who is now in the Ministry of the influential military. Bulganin replied: "Zhukov." Then I offered to take Zhukov. He agreed, but that Zhukov was unarmed. And so, at 11:00 am on June 26 (and Khrushchev's

call was on June 25), at Bulganin's suggestion, we got into his car and drove to the Kremlin. Following us in another car, Zhukov, Brezhnev and others arrived. Bulganin led us all to the waiting room at Malenkov's office, then left us and went to Malenkov's office. A few minutes later Khrushchev, Bulganin, Malenkov and

Molotov came out to us. They began to tell us that Beria had recently been behaving impudently towards the members of the Presidium of the Central Committee, spying on them, eavesdropping on telephone conversations, following them, who goes where, with whom the members of the Presidium meet, is rude to everyone, etc. They informed us that there would now be a meeting of the Presidium of the Central Committee, and then, according to the agreed signal, transmitted through Malenkov's assistant - Sukhanov, we needed to enter the office and arrest Beria. By this time he had not yet arrived. Approximately

an hour later, that is, at 13.00 on June 26, 1953, a prearranged signal followed, and we, five armed men, the sixth comrade Zhukov, quickly entered the office where the meeting was taking place. Comrade Malenkov

announced: "In the name of Soviet law, arrest Beria." Everyone drew their weapons, I pointed it straight at Beria and ordered him to put his hands up. At this time, Zhukov searched Beria, after which we took him to the rest room of the Chairman of the Council of Ministers, and all members of the Presidium and candidate members remained to hold the meeting, and Zhukov

also remained there. From the story of Kirill Semenovich, a curious picture emerges. Zhukov is involved in the operation only at the very last moment and, just in case, is left without a gun. This means that Khrushchev and Bulganin do not fully trust him. Why?

Sergo Beria claims that his father was friends with Zhukov, who often visited their house. Beria shared the thoughts of Georgy Konstantinovich that the institute of political workers should be liquidated in the army. Of course, Sergo Lavrentievich is an interested person. He really wants to bring the name of his father closer to the name of the one who has now been made a national hero. Is there any other evidence?

It turns out there is! After his arrest, Lavrenty Pavlovich bombarded Malenkov ("dear Georgy"), Khrushchev and other colleagues with desperate letters, where he pointed out his past merits. On July 1, he wrote: "T.T. Malenkov and Molotov (another version of the decoding - Mikoyan. - **B.S.**) should know well that Zhukov, when he was removed from the General Staff at the instigation of Mekhlis, because his position was very dangerous, together with you we persuaded him to appoint him commander of the front and thereby saved the future hero of our Patriotic War; or when comrade Zhukov was expelled from the Central Committee — we were all hurt." If Beria did not lie, looking into the eyes of imminent death, then this letter proves that he and Georgy Konstantinovich were not on bad terms.

Khrushchev, Malenkov and their supporters really needed an authoritative military leader, whose presence would cheer up the generals going on a dashing and unusual business: to arrest the marshal. True, among the conspirators was the Minister of Defense, Marshal Bulganin, but he was not popular among the generals. Khrushchev entrusted the preparation of the team for the arrest of Beria to Colonel General Moskalenko, who headed the Moscow Air Defense District and was well known to Nikita Sergeevich from the war. It was on Khrushchev's recommendation that Kirill Semenovich was appointed in the fall of 1943 to command the 38th Army, which liberated the capital of Ukraine.

But Moskalenko was not widely known. And even today he is most often remembered only in connection with the arrest of Beria. Another thing is Zhukov, Bulganin's first deputy. His presence could impress even the Kremlin guards, if they suddenly decided to intercede for their boss. But Khrushchev and Malenkov were probably aware of the contacts between Zhukov and Beria and were afraid that suddenly the "Marshal of Victory" would take the side of the "Lubyansk Marshal" and, God forbid, arrange a shootout at a meeting of the Presidium. So, just in case, they decided not to give him a gun. But Georgy Konstantinovich quickly orientated himself in the situation. The archives contain rough

drafts of Malenkov's speech, with which he opened the meeting on June 26, and his abstract notes of the proposals made there. Georgy Maksimilianovich accused an old friend of the fact that "the enemies wanted to put the bodies of the Ministry of Internal Affairs over the party and the government" and that Beria himself, from the post of head of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, "controls the party and the government," which "is fraught with great dangers." Lavrenty Pavlovich was accused of "suppressing the team." At the same time, Mikoyan proposed to relieve Beria from the post of first deputy government and appoint him minister of the oil industry (Khrushchev writes about the same in his memoirs). This fact alone destroys all the legends that Lavrenty Pavlovich organized a conspiracy and planned a coup d'état. Where, in what country of the person accused of such crimes. will they be demoted from first vice-premiers to simple ministers as punishment? If any specific facts appeared at the meeting that convicted Beria of preparing a coup, Anastas Ivanovich would never have risked making such a proposal. After all, this would be a direct path to being declared Beria's accomplice, with all the ensuing consequences. Those present knew well that Mikoyan was one of those who recommended Lavrenty Pavlovich to work in Moscow.

Mikoyan himself, in his posthumously published memoirs, claimed that since the beginning of the 30s he had seen that Beria was a bad person. As follows from Malenkov's note and Khrushchev's memoirs, the old Kremlin fox, Anastas Ivanovich, considered Lavrenty Pavlovich good enough for the post of Minister of the Oil Industry, even at a time when most members of the Presidium of the Central Committee

leaned towards leaning the overly nimble head of the Ministry of Internal Affairs against the wall. Well, as for Mikoyan's statements that they tried to cover him up in repressions, but failed, let's leave the former head of Soviet foreign and domestic trade on the conscience. Suffice it to say that his signature flaunts under the decision of the Politburo of March 5, 1940 on the execution of 22,000 Poles. By the standards of the Nuremberg International Tribunal, it would be quite enough to be hanged. And there is no doubt that this is not the only document signed by the leader, about which they said: "from Ilyich to Ilyich - without a heart attack and paralysis." And as for Mikoyan's opinion, that Beria was moved upstairs, to the central office, by mysterious Georgians: one of the high-ranking Georgians, A.S. Yenukidze, lost his post as secretary of the All-Russian Central Executive Committee back in 1935, when Beria remained in the Transcaucasus and there was no question of his moving to Moscow; another Georgian in the Soviet leadership, Ordzhonikidze, committed suicide after a bitter conflict with Stalin. This happened a few months before the appointment of Lavrenty Pavlovich as the first deputy people's commissar of internal affairs. Is it possible that before nominating the head of the Communists of Georgia to such a responsible post, Iosif Vissarionovich did not consult with Mikoyan, who once worked together with Beria in the Transcaucasus? After

Beria's arrest, rumors circulated that Khrushchev and the others had succeeded in preempting Beria by literally one day. Allegedly, on June 27, Lavrenty Pavlovich was going to arrest the entire Presidium of the Central Committee at a performance at the Bolshoi Theater. I wonder which head of the conspiracy will agree to leave the country for 10 days on the eve of "Day X" in order to return only the day before? And just in mid-June, Beria was sent to the GDR, where unrest was growing, and after his arrival an uprising broke out against the regime of Walter Ulbricht. The time for liberalization had already been lost, and Lavrenty Pavlovich, not at all embarrassed, threw infantry and tanks from the Soviet occupation forces against the practically unarmed demonstrators. Hundreds of dead, thousands of wounded, the action of the workers of Berlin and other cities of East Germany was drowned in blood. Beria flew to Moscow only on the morning of the 26th and immediately got from the airship to the last "ball" in his life - a meeting of the Presidium of the Central Committee (he was told that it was not the Central Committee - but the Council

Placed after his arrest in the bunker of the headquarters of the Moscow military district, Lavrenty Pavlovich bombarded his colleagues with letters, where he begged for mercy. On June 28, he wrote to Malenkov: "Dear George. I was sure that from that big criticism at the Presidium I would draw all the necessary conclusions for myself and be useful in the team (perhaps here Beria literally repeated Mikoyan's proposal. - **B.S.**). But the Central Committee decided otherwise. I think that the Central Committee did the right thing. I consider it necessary to say that I have always been infinitely devoted to the party of Lenin-Stalin, to my homeland, I have always been active in work. He worked in Georgia, in Transcaucasia, in Moscow in the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Council of Ministers of the USSR and again in the Ministry of Internal Affairs, he gave everything to work, tried to select personnel for business qualities, principled comrades devoted to our party. The same applies to the Special Committee, the First and Second Main Directorates dealing with atomic affairs and guided missiles. The same position of the Secretariat and assistants in the Council of Ministers. I ask comrades Malenkov Georgy, Molotov Vyacheslav, Voroshilov Klimenty, Khrushchev Nikita, Kaganovich Lazar, Bulganin Nikolai, Mikoyan Anastas and others - forgive me if anything happened during these fifteen years of great and intense joint work. Dear comrades, I wish you all great success in the struggle for the cause of Lenin and Stalin, for the unity and solidity of our Party, for the flourishing of our glorious Motherland.

George, please, if you consider it possible, not to leave your family (wife and old mother) and son Sergo, whom you know, without attention."

We must pay tribute to Lavrenty Pavlovich. In this, in fact, dying letter, he not only fussed about himself (although he did not directly ask for anything, he only hinted that for good work, for the atomic bomb and rocket weapons, one might not be shot). And not only about the family, which Malenkov, of course, did not leave without attention: his wife Nina and son Sergo were immediately arrested. Beria asked, as it were, for his employees, up to assistants and secretaries. He said that he selected people only for business qualities, naively hoping that disgrace would pass them by. Maybe because he didn't feel any real guilt. After all, not only was he not preparing a coup d'etat, but he was not even going to remove any of the members of the Presidium.

Two days later, having no reaction to the first message, Beria wrote again. Now he decided that if he repented not of real mistakes, but of non-existent sins that he was accused of, life might be saved. The prisoner turned to "friend George": "Especially difficult and unforgivable is my behavior towards you, where I am one hundred percent to blame." Beria claimed that "I subjected my actions to the most severe criticism, I strongly condemn myself." He reminded his comrades-in-arms of their former friendship: "Nikita Sergeevich! Except for the last incident at the Presidium of the Central Committee, where you strongly and angrily scolded me, with which I fully agree, we have always been great friends. I have always been proud that you are an excellent Bolshevik and an excellent comrade, and I have told you about this more than once, when I managed to talk about it, I also told Comrade Stalin. I have always treasured

your attitude... Lazar Moiseevich and Anastas Ivanovich. Both of you have known me for a long time. Anastas sent me back in 1920 from Baku for illegal work in Georgia. Then still Menshevik. On behalf of the Caucasian Bureau of the RCP and the Revolutionary Military Council of the 11th Army. Lazar has known me since 1927, and I will never forget the help given to me in party work in Transcaucasia, when you were secretary of the Central Committee. Much could be said during my time in Moscow. But I will say one thing: I have always seen your principled attitude, help in

There was no answer. On July 2, Beria wrote the last letter, addressing all the "dear comrades" from the Presidium of the Central Committee at once: "They want to deal with me without trial or investigation, after 5 days of imprisonment, without a single interrogation, I beg you all to prevent this, please immediate intervention, otherwise it will be too late

Dear comrades, I urge you to appoint the most responsible and strict commission for a strict investigation of my case, headed by Comrade Molotov or Comrade Voroshilov. Surely a member of the Presidium of the Central Committee does not deserve to have his case carefully examined, charged, demanded an explanation, witnesses interrogated. From all points of view this is good for the cause and for the Central Committee. Why do it the way it is done now - they put me in the basement, and no one finds out or asks anything. Dear comrades, is it only the only and correct way to resolve without trial and

clarification of the case against a member of the Central Committee and his comrade, after 5 days of imprisonment in the basement, execute him.

Once again I beg you all, especially the comrades who worked with comrades Lenin and comrade Stalin, enriched with great experience and wise in resolving the complex cases of comrades Molotov, Voroshilov, Kaganovich and Mikoyan. In the name of the memory of Lenin and Stalin, I ask, I beg you to intervene, and you will all make sure that I am absolutely clean, honest, your faithful friend and comrade, a faithful member of our party. Apart from strengthening the power of our country and the unity of our great

party, I had no thoughts. I supported my Central Committee and my Government no less than any other comrades and did everything I could. I affirm that all charges will be dropped, if only you want to investigate it. What a haste, and what a suspicious one.

T. Malenkov and Comrade Khrushchev, please do not persist. Wouldn't it be bad if t-shcha rehabilitate. Again and again I beg you to intervene and not to destroy your innocent old friend. Lavrenty Pavlovich at that moment seriously feared that

in the very near future, perhaps in the next few hours, he would be killed right in the concrete basement without trial and investigation ... Now he decided to deny everything and insist on his complete innocence. And from the shock associated with the arrest and five-day imprisonment in complete isolation, it seems that he lost his real perception of reality. Only this can explain Beria's belief that he is going to be killed by villainous jailers who act without the knowledge of the "old comrades" from the Central Committee. Malenkov, Khrushchev and other members of the Presidium knew as well as the arrested man that he had not prepared any conspiracy. And therefore, none of them was going to conduct an investigation, let alone "rehabilitate a comrade". Beria did not write any more letters. They stopped giving him pencil and paper. Sergio Beria is convinced that his father was killed immediately after the arrest, and the arrest itself did not take place in the meeting room of the Presidium of the Central Committee, but in the mansion

on Malaya Nikitskaya Street, where Lavrenty Pavlovich lived: "About noon (June 26, 1953.
- **B. S.)**

in the office of Boris Lvovich Vannikov, my father's closest assistant in atomic affairs, the bell rang. Called test pilot Ahmet-Khan Sultan.

"Sergo," he shouts, "there was a shootout at your house. Did you understand everything? You have to run,

Sergo! We will help. We really had a squadron, and it was not difficult to hide in, say, Finland or Sweden. And later I was convinced more than once that these pilots were real friends. But what does it mean to run in such a situation? If the father is arrested, the escape is more proof of his guilt.

When we drove up (to the mansion. - **B.S.**), we didn't notice anything unusual from the side of the street, but there were two armored personnel carriers in the courtyard. Internal security did not let us through. Father was not at home. When I was returning to the car, I heard from one of the guards: "Sergo, I saw someone carried out on a stretcher, covered with a tarpaulin." Over time, I tracked down other witnesses who confirmed that they saw those stretchers.

In 1958, I met with Shvernik, a member of that same court (over L.P. Beria. - **B.S.**). I can, he says, tell you one thing: I never saw your father alive. Understand as you know, I will not say anything more. Another member of the court,

Mikhailov, also made it clear to me when we met at a dacha near Moscow that a completely different person was sitting in the courtroom, but he could not talk about this topic.

Why has no one ever shown either me or my mother at least one interrogation sheet signed by the father?

There is no secret for me why my father was killed. Considering that he was dealing with politicians, my father suggested that his comrades-in-arms convene a party congress, or at least an expanded Plenum of the Central Committee, where they could talk about what the people had long been waiting for. My father believed that the entire leadership of the country should tell - openly and honestly! - about what happened in the thirties, forties, early fifties, about his behavior during the period of mass repressions. When, I remember, he said this shortly before his death at home, my mother warned: "Consider, Lavrenty, that this is your end. They will never forgive you for that."

Sergei Lavrentievich's assumption that his father was killed on the day of his arrest is easily refuted by Beria's prison letters preserved in the archive. But as for the interrogation protocols, perhaps, as we will see below, there really lies the key to unraveling the mystery of Beria's death. However, it must first be emphasized that the fragments

Several protocols of interrogations of the "Lubyansk Marshal" during the investigation were published by historians. ON THE. Zenkovich, for example, cites interrogations that took place on July 23 and August 7 concerning the authorship of the book "On the History of the Bolshevik Organizations in Transcaucasia." Beria was accused of embezzling someone else's manuscript, published in 1935 under his name. Lavrenty Pavlovich pleaded not guilty. He insisted that "this report (made by Beria at a meeting of the Tbilisi Party organization in July 35th. - **B.S.**) was prepared on my initiative, I was the main participant in the preparation of materials for the report, the IMEL branch of the city of Tbilisi helped me in collecting materials. About 20 people took part in the preparation of this report, and about 100 people were accepted by former participants of that time. I deny that I did this in order to ingratiate myself with Stalin. I considered it absolutely necessary to publish

such a work. At the next interrogation, Beria was asked about the fate of one of the creators of the report, the former head of the propaganda department of the Transcaucasian regional party committee, Eric Bedia, whose arrest was allegedly caused by his statement during a friendly party that it was not Beria, but he, Bedia, wrote the ill-fated report. Lavrenty Pavlovich denied that he ordered Bedia's arrest because of his careless statement. Beria also denied that he knew about the execution of Bedia by the

verdict of the troika. If you look at this case from today's standpoint, then there is nothing unusual in the case of a report on the history of the Bolshevik organizations in Transcaucasia. Similarly, books for Stalin, Zhdanov, Malenkov, Khrushchev and other party leaders were written by groups of "speech writers". And Beria was helped not only by Bedia, but by the whole team of the Georgian IMEL to create an immortal report. If desired, such an accusation could be brought against any of the Lubyanka Marshal's accusers. But everything that came to hand was suitable against Lavrenty Pavlovich, since it was quite difficult to confirm the main charge of conspiracy even with false testimony. Neither the prosecutor nor his party mentors could even come up with a scenario of "Beria's coup" in any way plausible. Bedia could have been shot not at all because of the book, but, so to speak, according to their position - Stalin and Yezhov put most of the officials at the level of head. department of the Republican Central Committee

or regional party committee. Beria, on the other hand, probably had no desire to cross off the chatty comrade-in-arms from the execution list.

Recall that in the case of the kidnapping and murder of the wife of Marshal Kulik, evidence was given to investigators not only by the direct perpetrators, but also, on August 26, 1953, by Beria

himself. In Nina Teimurazovna's letter, written to Khrushchev from Butyrskaya prison on January 7, 1954, it was never mentioned that during interrogations the investigators at least once referred to the testimony of her husband. Beria's widow claimed: "A truly terrible accusation falls on me that I have been Beria's wife for more than thirty years (since 1922) and bore his name. At the same time, until the day of his arrest, I was devoted to him, treated his social and state position with great respect and blindly believed that he was a devoted, experienced and necessary person for the Soviet state (he never gave me any reason or reason to think otherwise) word). I did not figure out that he was an enemy of the Soviet government, which I was told during the investigation. But in this case, he deceived not only me, but the entire Soviet people, who, judging by his social position and positions, also trusted him.

Based on his useful activities, I spent a lot of work and energy in caring for his health (in his youth he was ill with his lungs, later with his kidneys) (the wording is wonderful: it turns out that it was not love that moved Nina Teimurazovna in her care for her husband, but only the awareness of party duty - it is necessary to create the proper conditions for the work of a valuable cadre; if here we have not the usual trick to diminish our "guilt" as a "member of the family of an enemy of the people", then we can assume why Lavrenty Pavlovich liked to go left. - B.S.) . For the entire time of our life together, I saw him at home only in the process of eating or sleeping, and since 1942, when I learned from him about his adultery, I refused to be his wife (Lavrenty Pavlovich testified during the investigation that he "had contracted syphilis" the period of the war, it seems, in 1943, and underwent a course of treatment "; perhaps, in connection with the illness, the wife found out about the countless love tricks of her missus. - **B.S.**) and lived from 1943 outside the city and at first alone, and then with his son's family. During this time, I suggested to him more than once, in order to create normal conditions for him, to divorce me in order to marry a woman who, perhaps,

fall in love and agree to be his wife. He refused me this, arguing that without me, for a certain time, he could somehow get out of the rut of life. I, believing in the power of habit, stayed at home, so as not to disturb his family and give him the opportunity, when he wants it, to relax in this family. I came to terms with my shameful position in the family in order not to negatively affect his performance, which I considered directed not hostile, but necessary and useful.

I did not know anything about his immoral acts towards the family, which I was also told about during the investigation. I considered his betrayal of me, as a wife, to be accidental and partly blamed myself, since during these years I often went to my son, who lived and studied in

another city. Beria's immoral behavior was a real find for his colleagues who overthrew him, since nothing significant could be found to support the version of the conspiracy. Yes, and in the previous activities of Lavrenty Pavlovich, it was not possible to find a special crime, by the standards of that time. At the July Plenum, Secretary of the Central Committee A.A. Andreev pleased those present with such a revelation: "Beria tried in every possible way to ensure that all members of the Politburo were marked with something, that they were spotted, but he, you see, is clean. And in fact, look, you can't present anything to him - he's clean." The members of the Central Committee laughed in unison. They guessed that it was not difficult for Malenkov, Molotov, Khrushchev and others to swim in shit without any

help from Lavrenty Pavlovich. Voroshilov also aroused sincere, healthy laughter from the participants in the Plenum when he provided such evidence that Lavrenty Pavlovich did not enjoy authority among his subordinates: after the arrest of Beria, not a single Chekist wrote a letter in his defense, which would say: "What have you done to our great leader, how are we going to get along without our Beria?.." Party leaders knew well that there were no such letters even when Beria's predecessors were arrested: Yagoda, Yezhov, Abakumov. And even if Stalin thought of sending Kliment Efremovich "to Tukhachevsky's headquarters," not one of the commanders and commissars of the Red Army would have dared to intercede for him.

Lavrenty Pavlovich also had real crimes: the repression of innocent people in Georgia in the 30s, the execution of Polish officers in 1940, the execution of Soviet generals in 1941, the deportation of "punished peoples" in 1944, thousands, tens of thousands of ruined lives (but still not hundreds of thousands, like Yezhov's, and not millions, like the "Kremlin highlander"). But he shared responsibility for all these crimes with Stalin and other party leaders. The heirs of the Generalissimo were not yet ready to stigmatize him for unjustified repressions, fearing to completely undermine the people's faith in communism. Beria's colleagues in the Presidium of the Central Committee shed much more foreign blood than Lavrenty Pavlovich. Khrushchev, at the height of the terror, happened to head the Moscow party organization, and from January 38, the Ukrainian one. Both had immeasurably more members, including senior officials, than in the Communist Party of Georgia subordinated to Beria. And the notorious troikas that sent people to their deaths usually consisted of the prosecutor, the head of the NKVD and the head of the local party organization. It is interesting how many dozen times more people were on those execution lists that Nikita Sergeevich signed, compared to those on the conscience of Lavrenty Pavlovich? Having come to power, Khrushchev, with the help of his man at the head of the KGB, I.A. Serov, tried to destroy these lists. Only the speeches of Nikita Sergeevich, published in the press, remained. They are worth reading.

Back in January 1936, Khrushchev said in one of his speeches: "Only 308 people have been arrested; for our Moscow organization, this is not enough." And on August 22 of the same year, at a Moscow party activist, he touched on the process of Zinoviev and Kamenev: "... Comrade Stalin, his sharp Leninist eye ... always aptly pointed out the paths of our party, from where reptiles can crawl out. It is necessary to shoot not only these scoundrels, but Trotsky is also subject to execution ... "And he immediately called for reprisal against the son of one of the defendants, I.P. Bakaeva: "... At one Moscow factory ("Dukat"), a Bakaevsky snake worked, under his last name. And the party organization does not even know such odious names ... Since the name is Bakaev, they must examine him under a magnifying glass ... Where is the vigilance?

So Nikita Sergeevich Beria, taking aim, quickly brought to the end, that is, to execution. In June

1938, at the 14th Congress of Ukrainian Communists, Khrushchev called for finishing off the "enemies of the people": Yezhov came, and a real rout began. I think that now we will finish off the enemies in Ukraine ... "And in February 1940, when there were almost no" enemies "in the wild, he urged not to lose vigilance:" Our enemies have not rested and will not rest as long as the capitalist encirclement exists. This must be remembered. In Ukraine, we cleaned up the enemies very well. But some still remain. They feel lonely, afraid to raise their heads, but they are. So you have to look at both." Of the crimes of Molotov, Voroshilov and Kaganovich, Nikita Sergeevich, of necessity, enlightened the Plenum of the Central Committee in June 1957 in detail, when he fought against the "anti-party group". Mikoyan, close to

Khrushchev, also managed to thoroughly clean the archives of traces of his own work in the field of eradicating "enemies of the people." But the mere fact that in 1937 he supervised the NKVD and delivered a keynote speech at the anniversary celebration in honor of the 20th anniversary of the Cheka speaks of

many things.

Beria's accusations of sexual promiscuity, I repeat, were very useful to his opponents. During the investigation, Lavrenty Pavlovich admitted: "I easily got along with women, had numerous connections, short ones. These women were brought to my house, I never visited them. They were delivered to me by Sarkisov (head of the secretariat. - **B.S.**) and Nadaraya (deputy head of personal security. - B.S.), especially Sarkisov. "- At your direction, Sarkisov and Nadaraya kept lists of your mistresses," said the USSR Prosecutor

General R.A. Rudenko. "Do you confirm this?"

"I confirm," Beria replied despondently. "- You are presented with nine lists in which there are 62 women," the prosecutor denounced the former chief of the

Ministry of Internal Affairs. "Most of the women," Beria showed, "who appear in these lists, my cohabitants. The lists were compiled over a number of years.

"Do you admit that you have turned your house into a den of debauchery, and your bodyguards into pimps?" Roman Andreevich suggested the correct answer to the defendant.

"I did not turn the house into a brothel, and that Sarkisov and Nadaraya were used for pandering is a fact," Lavrenty Pavlovich partially admitted his guilt.

The only surviving list, maintained by the former head of the secretariat Beria Sarkisov, contained the names of 39 women. Later, rumor increased this number to 500 and even 800, making Lavrenty Pavlovich a real sexual giant. Although, probably, women really liked Beria. At the July Plenum, Secretary of the Central Committee of the CPSU N.N. Shatalin claimed that "numerous letters from women of an intimate and vulgar content" were found in the office of the deposed minister. Undoubtedly, the formidable owner of the Lubyanka had his admirers. But often the partners were brought to his mansion by force, and sometimes they were ordinary prostitutes who were paid at the prevailing market rates - from 100 to 250 rubles per visit. Confessions of several victims of Beria's lust were sewn to

the case. Here is one of them: "I tried to evade his harassment, asked Beria not to touch me, but Beria said that philosophy was useless here, and took possession of me. I was afraid to resist him, because I was afraid that Beria might imprison my husband. Only a scoundrel can take advantage of the dependent position of a subordinate's wife in order to take possession of her. And here is the story of a schoolgirl, the most terrible of all: "Once I went to the store for bread along Malaya Nikitskaya Street. At this time, an old man in pince-nez got out of the car, with him was a colonel in the uniform of the Ministry of Internal Affairs. When the old man began to examine me, I was frightened and ran away. The next day, a colonel came to us, who later turned out to be Sarkisov. Sarkisov fraudulently, under the guise of helping a sick mother and saving her from death, lured me to the house on Malaya Nikitskaya and began to say that his friend, a very big worker, very kind, who loves children very much and helps all the sick, will save my mother. At 5-6 pm on May 7, 1949, an old man in pince-nez, that is, Beria, came. He affectionately greeted me, said that there was no need to cry, my mother would be cured and everything would be fine. Us

gave lunch. I believed that this kind person would help me in such a difficult time for me (my grandmother died and my mother was dying).

I was 16 years old. I was in 7th grade. Then Beria took me to his bedroom and raped me. It is difficult to describe my state after what happened. They didn't let me out of the house for three days. Sarkisov sat for a day, Beria for a night. At the trial, a man resembling Lavrenty Pavlovich admitted in his last word that he had committed a crime by having an intimate relationship with a minor, but denied that it was rape.

There were also funny cases. One of Lavrenty Pavlovich's mistresses allegedly stated during interrogation: "Beria offered me intercourse in an unnatural way, which I refused. Then he suggested another, also unnatural way, to which I agreed. This unsolvable puzzle came into being thanks to the amazing chastity of Soviet investigators, who did not dare to trust the paper with what methods of sex the hero-lover from Malaya Nikitskaya tempted his passion. By the way, some testimonies of Beria's girlfriends inspire serious doubts. For example, one of them, an artist of the Radio Committee M., whom, by the way, Lavrenty Pavlovich helped to get an apartment in Moscow, claimed that their last meeting took place on June 24 or 25, 1953, and Beria asked M. for the next meeting, scheduled in three day, come along with a friend. However, due to the arrest of the Lubyanka Marshal, the meeting did not take place. But, as we remember, on the eve of his fall, Beria spent ten days in the fraternal GDR, where he put things in order with an iron hand, and returned to Moscow only on the morning of the 26th, having gone straight from the airfield to the fateful meeting. Therefore, he could not meet with any of his mistresses the day before. He has, as they say, a 100% alibi. Perhaps M. got it wrong, and their meeting actually took place on the eve of Lavrenty Pavlovich's departure to Berlin. Although the artist was interrogated only two or three months after the dramatic events, it was tricky to forget the dates so quickly. Rather, it can be assumed that M., like other mistresses of Beria, said what the investigators wanted from them, inventing more and more new adventures of the villain-lover, and the interrogators did not even think about the plausibility of what they were told. By the way, most of the witnesses probably presented themselves as victims

violence, so that they are not suspected of sympathy for the defeated "enemy of the people." Therefore, today it is difficult to say which of the Beria partners gave themselves voluntarily, and

which - under duress. In any case, "immorality" was drawn to articles for rape and abuse of office, but not to high treason. And it was dangerous to interrogate Beria on political matters. "Lubyansky Marshal" knew too much. I suspect that the interrogations stopped shortly after the little things like a book about the Bolsheviks of Transcaucasia, the kidnapping of Marshal Kulik's wife and the amorous adventures of Lavrenty Pavlovich were exhausted. However, even excerpts from the protocols of interrogations during the investigation have not yet been published, indicating that Beria was questioned about the details of his "immoral behavior."

Before understanding when and how the "Lubyansk Marshal" died, I want to give the floor to his jailer - the commandant of the headquarters of the Moscow Air Defense District. Here is what he said in an interview with the Vechernyaya Moskva newspaper on July 28, 1994: "Generals Moskalenko, Bakeev, Batitsky, Colonel Zub, Lieutenant Colonel Yuferev - adjutant commander, Colonel Erastov left the building (of the Council of Ministers. - **B.S.**) . Beria is among them. Yuferev got into the car to the left of Beria, Batitsky to the right, Zub and Moskalenko opposite. We started. Ahead - "ZIS-110", behind him - cars with fifty submachine gunners. Forty-fifty minutes later we arrived at the garrison guardhouse.

On the twenty-seventh, the commander called me (K.S. Moskalenko. - **B.S.**) and said that I was entrusted with the care of Beria. I have to cook food, feed him, give him water, bathe, cut, shave and, at his request, go with the general on duty to his call. When the commander said that I was attached to him, they told me: "Bring food." Send General Bakeev, Colonel Zub, and I carried the food. Good food, from the soldiers' canteen. He was sitting on the bed, such a well-fed man, well-groomed, in pince-nez. There are almost no wrinkles, the look is hard and angry (there was reason to be angry! - **B.S.**). Height is about 160-170 centimeters. Dressed in a gray suit, worn. At first he turned away, not looking at anyone. They say to him: "You eat." And he: "Did you bring a pencil and paper?" "Brought," the commander replied. He immediately began to write. When I gave him something to eat, he poured this bowl of soup on me - he took it and poured it out.

(for Major Khizhnyak, the soldier's soup was probably good; Beria, on the other hand, was used to much more refined food and, most likely, perceived what was brought to him as a camp gruel; and after all that had happened, Lavrenty Pavlovich's appetite, for sure, disappeared - from experiences, and a nervous breakdown occurred. - **B.S.**) Everyone was outraged. Strictly warned. But paper and pencil were left to him. At that time, he did not eat at all.

I was daily, up to twelve times a day. Soon he was transferred to the district headquarters on Osipenko Street, 29. We stayed there for three or four days, and then they transferred him to a large bunker, where there was a command post, in

the courtyard of the headquarters building. When asked by a correspondent how long the trial of Beria lasted, Khizhnyak replied: "More than a month. Every day except Saturday and Sunday. They worked from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Of course, with a break for lunch. The former commandant also denied widespread rumors that before the execution, Beria begged for mercy on his knees: "It didn't happen. I was with him from the very beginning to the end. No knees, no requests ... When he was sentenced, General Moskalenko ordered me to go home (Beria lived on the corner of Kachalov Street (Malaya Nikitskaya. - B.S.) **and** Vspolny Lane) and bring Beria a different suit (before that he was always in gray, in which he was arrested in the Kremlin). I arrived, there was a woman there. I said who I am. I need a suit. She gave it to me. Black. I changed

him. I burned the gray suit, and changed into a black suit.

When he changed clothes, he already knew that they were already preparing him.

With two carpenters, we made a wooden shield about three meters wide, two meters high. We attached him to the wall in the bunker, in the hall where the interrogations took place. The commander told me to make a steel ring, I ordered it, and they did it - they screwed it into the center of the shield. I was also ordered to prepare a tarpaulin, a rope. Prepared. We cooked all evening. I brought him. Hands were not tied. But when we brought him to the shield, I tied his hands to this ring, from behind.

According to Khizhnyak, before the execution, Beria behaved "nothing": "Only some kind of pallor, and the right side of his face twitched a little. I read in newspapers and books that people are blindfolded before execution. And I prepared a towel - an ordinary, soldier's one. Began to blindfold him. Just tied up - Batitsky: "What are you

are you tying up?! Let him see with his own eyes!" I untied. Members of the court were present: Mikhailov, Shvernik, also Batitsky, Moskalenko, his adjutant, Rudenko. There was no doctor. They stood six or seven meters away. Batitsky was a little ahead, took out his "parabellum" and shot Beria right in the bridge of his nose. He hung on the ring.

Then I untied Beria. They gave me another major. We wrapped him in a prepared tarp and into the car. It was December 23, 1953, closer to night. And when I began to tie the corpse wrapped in a canvas, I lost consciousness. Instantly. Kicked. And immediately woke up. Batitsky covered me with foul language. I was terribly sorry for Beria, because for half a year I got used to the person whom I took care of "(guardianship, we agree, is somewhat peculiar).

Before trying to figure out what is true and what is not true in Khizhnyak's testimony, I want to quote two documents concerning the death of Beria and those who were tried along with him. Here is the first document:

"Act of 1953 on December 23rd. On this date at 19:50, on the basis of the order of the chairman of the Special Judicial Presence of the Supreme Court of the USSR dated December 23, 1953, No. 003 by me, the commandant of the Special Judicial Presence, Colonel General Batitsky P.F., in the presence of the Prosecutor General of the USSR, the current State Counselor of Justice Rudenko R.A. and General of the Army Moskalenko K.S. (for participation in the arrest of Beria, Kirill Semenovich was granted the next rank. - **B.S.**) the sentence of the Special Judicial Presence was carried out in relation to Lavrenty Pavlovich, sentenced to capital punishment - the execution of Beria. And signatures: "Colonel General Batitsky. USSR Prosecutor General Rudenko. Army General Moskalenko.

And here is the second document: "Act. December 23, 1953. Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs of the USSR comrade. Lunev, Deputy Chief Military Prosecutor Comrade Kitaev in the presence of Colonel General Comrade. Hetman, Lieutenant General Bakeev and Major General Comrade. Sopilnik was executed by the sentence of the Special Judicial Presence of the Supreme Court of the USSR of December 23,

1953 on the following convicts: 1) Kobulov Bogdan

Zakharyevich, born in 1904, 2) Merkulov Vsevolod Nikolaevich, born in 1895,

3) Vladimir Georgievich Dekanozov, born in 1898; 4) Pavel Yakovlevich Meshik, born in 1910; 5) Lev Emelyanovich Vlodzimirsky, born in 1902; December 23, 1953 at 21:20 the above

the convicts were shot.

Death was ascertained by a doctor

(painting). Try, as in the well-known attentiveness test, to find ten or more significant differences, except for the names of the convicts, between these two documents of the same type. First of all, we can say that Khizhnyak was exactly right about one thing - there was no doctor during the execution of Beria. Because under the act of execution of Lavrenty Pavlovich there is no signature of the doctor who ascertained the death. This is the first striking oddity. How could it be, with regard to the secondary participants in the conspiracy, they took care to formalize everything in full accordance with legal norms, honor by honor, and they even forgot to certify the death of the main conspirator with a medical signature. Is it really only to give grounds for rumors that it was not Beria who was shot, but someone else, while the living Lavrenty Pavlovich is hiding either in Argentina or in Sweden?

It is felt that the act on Beria was drawn up hastily, skipping, in particular, the year of birth of the convict. But this is also important for the unambiguous identification of the person executed. Suddenly there are two Lavrenty Pavlovich Berias in the country, differing only in dates of birth! As for the

presence of members of the Special Judicial Presence during the execution of Beria (sorry, reader, for an involuntary pun), Khizhnyak, I think, was mistaken. In any case, they are not mentioned in any way in the act on the execution of the sentence. Is it just how the audience came to stare at the execution of the once formidable "Lubyansk Marshal", asking not to enter their names in the

protocol? There is another oddity as well. The first act was signed, in addition to the direct executor of the sentence, General Batitsky, prosecutor Rudenko and General Moskalenko. It is known that the latter two were the only ones whom the Presidium of the Central Committee entrusted to interrogate Beria during the investigation. None of the prosecutors, inves

generals were not allowed to approach a criminal who knew the biggest state secrets during the investigation. Only Major Khizhnyak looked after Lavrenty Pavlovich like a nurse for the sick, but he did not even have the right to exchange a word with him. The signature of the Prosecutor General Rudenko on the act of the execution of Beria is quite appropriate. It would seem that Moskalenko's signature does not raise questions either: Kirill Semenovitch was one of the members of the Special Judicial Presence that tried Beria. It is strange, however, that the act had to be signed by Moskalenko, and not by the chairman of the Judicial Presence, Marshal **I.S.** Konev. Did Ivan Stepanovich refuse? It seems not. The archive preserved Konev's order to the commandant of the Special Judicial Presence, Colonel-General I.F. Batitsky to immediately carry out the sentence against the convict L.P. Beria and present the act. On this paper there is a resolution: "The sentence was carried out at 19.50 on 23.12.53 Batitsky." The prescription, which is typical, is typed, and for some reason the act of the execution of Beria was written by hand. For some reason, the marshal did not want to be present while his order was being carried out. Although, like, there was a man not a timid dozen. Maybe the former subordinate General Moskalenko and Prosecutor General Rudenko strongly advised Konev to keep his nerves. and not be present at the execution?

It is also surprising that Batitsky, Rudenko and Moskalenko did not have time to wait two hours to sign the second act - on the execution of the rest of the convicts. They preferred to entrust this to much less important persons - Deputy Interior Minister Lunev and Deputy Chief Military Prosecutor Kitaev. And who was the direct executor of the sentence on Kobulov, Merkulov and others, is not clear from the text of the document. Either the condemned were shot by Lunev and Kitaev themselves (which is unlikely - this is not a royal affair in their positions), or the generals Getman, Bakeev and Sopil-nik mentioned in the second act, or unknown officers of the commandant's office. Recall that the

members of the Special Judicial Presence, the chairman of the All-Union Central Council of Trade Unions N.M. Shvernik (whom, according to Lavrenty Pavlovich, "the people do not know") and the secretary of the Moscow regional party committee N.A. Mikhailov, according to Sergo Beria, assured him that it was not his father who was at the trial, but a completely diffe

that another member of the court, Chairman of the Council of Trade Unions of Georgia M.I. Kuchava, in a conversation with the author of the book "Thirteen Iron People's Commissars", General of the Ministry of Internal Affairs V.F. Nekrasov stated that Beria himself, and not his double, was present at the hearing. Only Lavrenty Pavlovich was without his famous pince-nez, and it turned out that he suffered from strabismus. By the way, if the medical record of the former chief of the Ministry of Internal Affairs has been preserved, you can try to check whether he really mowed. What is curious: the former head of the Georgian trade unions did not notice that Beria had noticeably lost weight during his stay in prison. This is also alarming: did Lavrenty Pavlovich really not understand what was waiting for him, and retained an excellent appetite, especially since he had to

eat from the soldiers' canteen (and how soldiers are fed in our country is known). And now let's get back to Khizhnyak's story. For some reason, the former commandant assured the correspondent that the trial against Beria lasted more than a month. And this is one of the most significant errors in the testimony of the former jailer of the "Lubyansk Marshal". Indeed, in reality, the Special Judicial Presence, chaired by Konev, took less than a week - from December 18 to December 23, 1953. Where was Beria taken every day for a month from 10 am to 7 pm, with an hour break for lunch, when Beria was returned to the bunker, where Khizhnyak again had the good fortune

to see him (as can be understood from the text of the interview, the major was not present at the trial)? I'm going to venture a guess here. The protocol of the first interrogation of Beria published so far is dated July 23, the protocol of the last - August 26. So far, nothing is known about the existence of later protocols. Maybe after August 26, Beria was not interrogated at all? If so, then it turns out that the interrogations of Lavrenty Pavlovich lasted a little more than a month. Khizhnyak did not see Beria off to court every day at 10 o'clock in the morning, but to the investigation. And when they decided to stop the interrogations, Beria was shot

without any trial. And this happened, most likely, at the end of August or at the beginning of September. With this assumption, many details of Khizhnyak's story receive their rational explanation. He claims that Beria was shot "closer to the night." In the act, signed by Rudenko, Moskalenko and

You can't say that it's closer to the night. Khizhnyak claims that preparations for the execution took several hours, "the whole evening": while they made a wooden shield and a metal ring, while they went to get a new suit and dressed Beria in it. Meanwhile, court sentences in such cases, as a rule, were carried out immediately. So Konev's order contained a demand for the immediate execution of the sentence. When a colleague of Beria Abakumov was tried a year later (although the process was considered open, his transcript was kept under the heading "top secret" for many decades), the former head of the MGB was shot literally immediately after the death sentence was passed, immediately as they were taken out of the courtroom. At noon on December 19, the last meeting ended, and at 12.15 Viktor Semenovich received a bullet in the back of the head. He was still hoping for something. Abakumov's last words, interrupted by a shot, were: *"// write everything, everything to Polit"* ("the bureau" did not have time to finish). Khrushchev and his associates really feared that the former chief of the KGB, having learned about the death sentence, might say or, worse, write a lot of superfluous things, and they did not delay the execution for a single extra minute.

With Beria, according to Khizhnyak (and not to believe, it seems, there is no reason), they fiddled for several hours. Perhaps, of course, they began to make a shield for execution ahead of time, even before the verdict was passed. Well, there is nothing impossible in this. Both Rudenko, and Moskalenko, and other members of the Special Presence knew perfectly well what the verdict would be. But it is unlikely that purely technical details would have been decided before the verdict: how to shoot Beria - separately or together with other convicts (the shield with the ring was clearly designed for only one person). And they would never dress Lavrenty Pavlovich in a different suit during the meeting. And why, one wonders, did Moskalenko have the fantasy of dressing Beria from gray to black before being shot? Is it all the same in which one you go to the next world? After all, Beria's accomplices did not seem to be changed clothes, why is Lavrenty Pavlovich such an honor?

But for what. I think Khizhnyak forgot one detail: it was not the gray suit that he had to burn afterwards, but the black one. It is not surprising to forget: immediately after the execution, out of habit, the major collapsed into a swoon. Nobody burned the gray suit, because it was needed for the person who was to play the role of Beria in court. Double

certainly had an outward resemblance to Lavrenty Pavlovich, although, of course, not absolute. So let the participants and witnesses of Beria's arrest who were present at the trial make sure that they are facing the same person, in the same gray suit in which they took him to the Presidium of the Central Committee. And so that the incomplete resemblance was not so striking to people who knew Beria, the double was put in the dock without pince-nez. It was expected that the dissimilarity would be attributed to the absence of the traditional attribute of the external appearance of the Lubyanka Marshal. Indeed, in glasses and without glasses, a person often looks completely different. By the way, Khizhnyak may have been mistaken when he claimed that on the second day after his arrest he saw Beria in pince-nez. After all, in a letter to his colleagues on the Presidium dated July 1, Lavrenty Pavlovich complained: "T-shchi, I beg your pardon that I write not quite coherently and badly due to my condition, and also because of the weakness of the light and the lack of pince-nez (glasses)." The pince-nez was apparently taken away so that the prisoner could not open his veins with a piece of

glass. True, pince-nez could not be taken away on the first day of arrest, but on the second or third. Khrushchev, Malenkov and other members of the Presidium had good reasons not to let Beria live until the trial. Lavrenty Pavlovich knew a lot about each of the members of the top party leadership, which they did not want to bring to the attention of their colleagues. Not without reason, immediately after the arrest of Beria, by order of Khrushchev, the archive of the former chief of the Ministry of Internal Affairs was destroyed. The special commission burned, without parsing or reading, 11 bags of documents, about which they drew up a corresponding act. But Beria himself probably knew the contents of many spicy papers as a keepsake and at the trial he could try to "take the enemy to the grave with him", stating many unpleasant facts from the biographies of the "dear" Nikita Sergeevich, Georgy Maximilianovich, Vyacheslav Mikhailovich and others, arming the members of the Presidium with "fried material" against rivals in the escalating struggle for power. Therefore, Khrushchev instructed reliable people to interrogate the captured owner of the Lubyanka - Rudenko and Moskalenko, in whose personal devotion he had no doubt. But even they, it seems, Nikita Sergeevich did not trust to question the person under investigation about the alleged conspiracy and about Beria's activities as a member of the Presidium and head of the punitive department in relation to the current Kr

concerned things harmless, not having a political acuteness. It was about the authorship of a book on the history of the Bolshevik organizations in Transcaucasia, the kidnapping and murder of the wife of Marshal Kulik (the marshal himself had already been shot for three years), perhaps the love affairs of Lavrenty Pavlovich, his service in the Musavatist counterintelligence. Moreover, an amazing thing, during the investigation, Beria, according to the published testimony, denied everything, and at the trial he sometimes even admitted that which in reality did not exist. Before the Special Judicial Presence, he repented that he had acted "wrongly" by publishing a book about the Bolsheviks of Transcaucasia (as if something was different with the reports of Khrushchev and Malenkov!). At the trial, Lavrenty Pavlovich stated: "For a long time I hid my service in the Musavat counter-revolutionary intelligence. However, even while serving there, he did nothing harmful. Why couldn't he say that he was sent to the Musavatists on the instructions of Ordzhonikidze (after all, this was established by the investigation carried out on Stalin's instructions) and that he never concealed his service in the Musavatist counterintelligence, he honestly wrote about it in his autobiography! The most probable seems to me such an assumption

about the end of Beria. Lavrenty Pavlovich was shot in the bunker of the headquarters of the Moscow military district in late August or early September 1953 without any court verdict. He was shot by General Pavel Fedorovich Batitsky. It is possible that in the future Beria's interrogation protocols relating to the period after August 26, 1953 will be found. Then the time of death of "Lubyansky Marshal" would have to be dated a few days later than the last interrogation. The deadline here is December 17, because on the 18th the trial has already begun. But I think that it is not so long to pull with Beria

become.

Why was the trial held several months after the death of the main accused? Because the unknown double needed time to learn the role, and from Beria's appointed accomplices, Kobulov, Merkulov and others, it was necessary to obtain evidence in order to have enough material for the court performance. They did not know the big secrets of the Kremlin and did not pose a danger.

They may object: but Abakumov was safely brought to court and even the process was called open (although all the documents confiscated from Viktor Semenovich, as well as Beria's documents, were immediately destroyed -

away from sin, but I have already spoken about how open the Abakumov process was). I will answer: it was the end of the 54th in the yard then, the first sharp fight between Stalin's heirs had already passed, and the turn had not yet come for the new ones. A year ago, they shot Beria and officials of the Ministry of Internal Affairs close to him. Abakumov, thoroughly or not, blamed Lavrenty Pavlovich for his arrest. Now, thought Viktor Semenovitch, there was a chance to make Beria the culprit of everything that had happened, and he, Abakumov, as a victim of Beria's arbitrariness, would not be shot. Moreover, the process is open (the former minister of the MGB did not know that the entire audience in the courtroom was "brave and juror"). So Abakumov did not say too much, and when he came to his senses, it was too late. As soon as he hinted at the letter to the Politburo, he had already received a bullet in the back of the head. Before that, Beria himself ordered the liquidation of Yezhov and understood well that there would be no mercy for the chief of the Ministry of Internal Affairs accused of conspiracy. Khrushchev, Malenkov, Molotov and others, whose hands are already up to the elbows in blood, are not

going to almond. So, finally, he could put a big pig on his executioners so that it would not be so insulting to die. But if at the trial it was not Beria, but his double, why did this double refuse to plead guilty to what he was actually accused of: conspiracy and treason? The rest, like Beria's book and love affairs, was nothing more than spicy seasoning. After all, the defendant declared in his last word: "I must tell you that I have never been a traitor and a conspirator and could not be one. I didn't even have in my thoughts, and I didn't even think about liquidating the Soviet system and restoring capitalism. I think that in this case, the architects of the process took the path of least resistance. They could not come up with any convincing scenario for the "Beria plot". And other defendants were bound to participate in the conspiracy. If their boss confessed, they, denying their participation in the preparation of the coup, would be forced to ask Beria questions to which it would be difficult for the directors of the process to find any plausible answers. There could be confusion. Although the process was closed, the court hearings were broadcast to the offices of all members of the Presidium of the Central Committee. So that they would not worry and hear with their own ears: Lavrenty Pavlovich did not say anything bad about them.

Another important evidence that Beria was shot even before the trial can be considered the following fact. The act of cremation of the bodies of six Chekists, who were tried together with a man who looked like Beria, has been preserved. But the act of cremation of the body of Lavrenty Pavlovich himself was never found in the archives. Maybe that's why rumors arose among the people that Beria's body was completely dissolved in some very strong acid - so that even a handful of ashes would not remain from the executioner and traitor. Most likely, the situation was much simpler, without the creepy exoticism in the style of the Gothic novel and modern "horror films". Beria's corpse was cremated, but since this happened much earlier than December 23, and it didn't look like the burial of the convict after the execution of the legal sentence, they formalized the entire procedure as the cremation of an unknown person or recorded the body with a different surname.

My hypothesis that Beria was killed even before the trial and that a double was present at the trial instead of him can be tried to be confirmed by analyzing the materials of the investigation and the trial, which requires their full publication (or at least free access for researchers to the documents on the Beria case). The search for traces of a person who probably played the role of the defeated "Lubyansk Marshal" before the Special Judicial Presence can also bring good luck. If this hypothesis is correct, then the problem of Beria's rehabilitation appears from a completely unexpected angle.

Of course, Lavrenty Pavlovich was not a traitor to the Motherland. That is, rather, in relation to his "small homeland" - Georgia, Beria can be considered a traitor, since he, to the best of his ability, contributed to the absorption of the independent Georgian state by the Soviet Empire. But after all, he was tried in December 1953 not at all for this treason, he was called an English spy (because, supposedly, the Musavat counterintelligence was closely connected with the British). Today it is obvious that Beria has never been either an Azerbaijani-Musavatist, or a Georgian-Menshevik, or just a British spy. It is also clear that he did not plan any coup d'état. Therefore, Lavrenty Pavlovich should be found not guilty of the crimes that he was accused of at trial. But the former head of the NKVD is guilty of falsifying criminal cases and unjustified repressions, of deporting

"punished peoples", in the mass destruction of Polish officers and intelligentsia, representatives of the propertied classes and the intelligentsia of the Baltic States, Western Ukraine and Western Belarus (although it was not he who made the decisions on executions and deportations, but Stalin). He is also guilty of lesser crimes - rape and abuse of office. The latter was expressed in the fact that he forced women to cohabit, taking advantage of his high position as head of the NKVD and deputy head of government, and even, as if, directly threatening them and their loved ones with reprisals in case of refusal.

And further. Lavrenty Pavlovich in 1947, knowing about the upcoming monetary reform, placed all his savings in the amount of 40 thousand in advance in the savings bank in order to avoid confiscatory revaluation. By the way, at that time 40 thousand - a small amount. It would hardly be enough to buy a small car. Lavrenty Pavlovich did not save much for more than a quarter of a century of impeccable service. By the time of the arrest, Beria's financial position had significantly improved. He was seized savings deposits in the amount of 363 thousand rubles. But the legal origin of this money is not in doubt. As Deputy Presovmina Beria had a monthly salary of 8,000 rubles and a tax-free subsidy of 20,000 rubles. In addition, in the early 50s, for the leadership of the atomic and hydrogen project, he was awarded two Stalin Prizes of 150 and 100 thousand rubles. Yes, by the end of Stalin's rule, the party elite, unlike the entire Soviet people, really began to live prosperously, not like in the 30s and in the first half of the 40s.

Our prosecutor's office will certainly deal with the Beria case in the same way as it did with the Abakumov case. It reclassifies the accusations from treason and espionage to participation in unjustified repressions, adding to this rape and abuse of office. And he will leave the sentence in force or, as in the case of Abakumov, replace the execution with a 25-year sentence. So that Lavrenty Pavlovich could rejoice in the next world together with Viktor Semenovich. Although Beria was judged not for Katyn, and not even for the rape of a schoolgirl. And how to look from a legal point of view at the re-qualification of the accusation in the absence of the accused, who cannot defend himself, because he was shot? Yes, and the court

unconstitutional Special Presence, which took place in the absence of lawyers, can hardly be considered right. And this circumstance, I emphasize, casts doubt on the reliability of the evidence obtained during the process of the guilt of the defendants.

But if it is finally and firmly established that Lavrenty Pavlovich Beria was shot before the trial, then the legal situation will change dramatically. Whether you like it or not, the prosecutor's office will then have to fully rehabilitate the "Lubyansk Marshal". After all, it is impossible to recognize as legal a sentence handed down posthumously at a trial where the accused could not possibly be present, since he had already departed to another world. If, nevertheless, in this case, the sentence against Beria is upheld, then a wide field will open for posthumous trials. There are more than enough defendants. Here and Lenin, and Stalin, and Malenkov, and Khrushchev, and Dzerzhinsky, and Menzhinsky, Molotov, Zhdanov, Mikoyan, and Brezhnev, Andropov and Chernenko, you see, there is enough material to sentence them to the highest penalty - life imprisonment. The dead will rejoice that we have abolished the death penalty. To the political leaders, one can add thousands and thousands of ordinary perpetrators of the "Red Terror", and even ordinary criminals who managed to avoid trial during their lifetime. A good plot for the theater of the absurd!

Legal rehabilitation, if it occurs, will by no means mean moral rehabilitation. Before God's judgment, Lavrenty Pavlovich has something to answer for. In conclusion, I want to reflect on how the fate of the Soviet Union and Beria himself would have developed if the perestroika he had started had succeeded. Would the marshal have prevented the collapse of the USSR? Hardly. Beria's reforms would have

given more rights to the republics and would have raised the role of national languages and cultures. This would increase the centrifugal tendencies. In the same direction, Beria's proposal, through the redistribution of power in the localities, would consolidate the de facto priority of the allied Council of Ministers over the Presidium of the Central Committee that had developed under Stalin's dictatorship. The real levers of control, Lavrenty Pavlovich believed, should be concentrated in the Councils of Mines of the republics and regional executive committees, and let the republican Central Committees and regional committees be in charge only of

leadership such a reform could pass. After all, none of the four main Stalinist heirs possessed full power and did not have undivided control over either the party or the Soviet apparatus. It would have ended the same way

as Gorbachev's perestroika. The Soviet Union would have collapsed thirty-five years earlier than it actually happened, and the communist system on its territory would have ceased to exist. The party bureaucracy would fight the Soviet one. Some of the bureaucrats would adapt to a market economy, while others would go into opposition. Was Beria a supporter of the market, and how fair are his accusations of striving to restore capitalism? I believe that by the end of his life, Lavrenty Pavlovich, as a true pragmatist, realized the bankruptcy of the economic system of socialism. Beria saw that both in the atomic and rocket projects that he had to manage, there was a copying, respectively, of American and German samples. Let us recall that in his conversation with Sakharov, he acknowledged the superiority of the United States in organizing production. And here is what Beria said to his secretaries P.A. Sharia and G.A. Ordynstev about the GDR: "How could we create a united Germany from capitalist West Germany and socialist East? Germany must be made a bourgeois-democratic republic. There is no need to build socialism in the GDR, there is no need to plant collective farms, from which the peasants are fleeing to the West." In detente relations with the capitalist countries and the end of the Cold War, he was even ready to agree to the return of the South Kuril Islands to Japan in order to help improve Soviet-Japanese relations. Probably, in the USSR, Beria would have tried to somehow transform the collective farms, gradually free the economy from ideological dogmas.

Did Lavrenty Pavlovich set the collapse of the USSR as his goal? Doubtful. He occupied too significant a post in Moscow to be satisfied with the post of head of independent Georgia - the only position for which he could apply after all the peoples of the Soviet Union had gone to national quarters. This is precisely the path followed by the closest associate of Gorbachev, E.A. Shevardnadze, but no one seems to suspect him that he planned ahead of time to break up the Soviet Union in order to sit down

president in Tbilisi. Yes, and the power of Beria, even only as chairman of the Special Committee, was much greater than the power of the Georgian president.

If, as a result of Beria's perestroika, the USSR ceased to exist, it would be a boon for all Soviet peoples. More than three decades earlier, they would have freed themselves from the fetters of socialism and would have started moving towards a normal market economy from much better positions than in 1991. Many, especially in the newly annexed western territories, would not have lost their capitalist attitude to work and enterprise, the intellectual elite would have retained to a greater extent its connection with the pre-revolutionary past, and the isolation of the country from the outside world would have lasted only thirty, not sixty-odd years. . Probably, with such a development of events, both Russia and Georgia today would be much more prosperous countries than it actually turned out to be. According to such a competent

witness as the former head of the secretariat of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and one of Beria's speechwriters, Academician of the Georgian Academy of Sciences P.A. Sharia, Lavrenty Pavlovich was "a state worker of a non-Soviet type, recognizing as the basis of state leadership mainly organizational technology and office-behind-the-scenes combinations in the placement of personnel. If we add to this the limited general theoretical, and therefore, the political horizons of Beria, on the one hand, and his unconditional organizational abilities, on the other hand, it must be recognized as a logical consequence of his entire previous career that after the death of Stalin he went too far, imagined himself a little if not an omnipotent person and lost a sense of critical attitude towards himself. From the point of view of an academician-diamatist, "limited

general theoretical training" could only mean ignorance of Marxist-Leninist dogmas or an unwillingness to follow them. Today, such Beria would rather be brought into the asset. I am convinced that the overwhelming majority of the population of Western Europe and North America, not excluding the highest state leaders, have a very weak understanding of Marxist theory (if they have any) and do not suffer from it at all. Well, as for his omnipotence, Lavrenty Pavlovich never made a mistake. That's why the only

I saw a chance to stay in the upper echelon of power in an alliance with Malenkov. As a result, Beria, like Trotsky, who was somewhat similar to him, turned out to be a good administrator (though only in a totalitarian system), but a useless politician. In the localities, even under Stalin, power remained in the hands of party secretaries, although each of them could be leaned against the wall at any moment. After the death of the dictator, the secretaries of the regional committees and the republican Central Committee only perked up, as Beria started a thorough shake-up of the party leadership along national lines. Yes, and his friend George, he rather scared with his irrepressible activity, and Khrushchev skillfully fueled this fear, suggesting to the near-minded Malenkov that Beria was aiming for his place as the first person of the state. As a result, Nikita Sergeevich himself ended up in this place, to whom other heirs in March of the 53rd imprudently ceded control over the party apparatus. Georgy Maksimilianovich, in the 57th, ended up in the "anti-party group" and was overthrown from the Olympus of power. But all this happened later. And in June 53rd, the fall of Beria was welcomed by members of the Presidium of the Central Committee and the local

Here is the assessment of Beria given by the former Minister of Agriculture N.A. Benediktov: "Yes, he had vices, he was a dishonest, unscrupulous person - like other people's commissars, I had to suffer from him. But for all his indisputable flaws, Beria had a strong will, the qualities of an organizer, the ability to quickly grasp the essence of the issue and quickly navigate in a difficult environment. I think it's close to the truth. I will only add that in the Soviet system, Beria's pragmatism, coupled with the KGB past, doomed him to death. Perhaps, in the last days of his life, sitting in a concrete bag,

Lavrenty Pavlovich remembered his words that "we have a lot of space in the turma", and regretted them. Don't dig another hole. Beria understood what those who were sent to his death felt by his department. Maybe he repented of something before his death. Only it is not known - in what: in the fact that he ruined many innocent souls, or in the fact that he so stupidly lost in the decisive battle for power.

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